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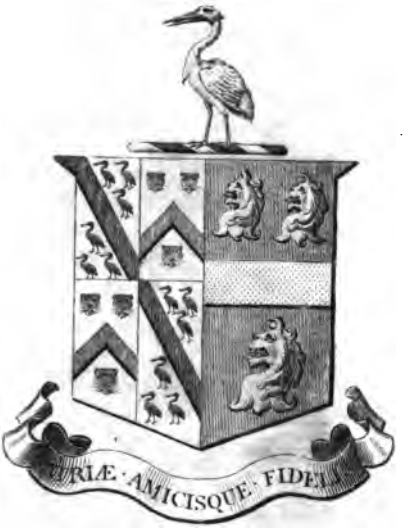

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LORD BOLINGBROKE'S

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THE

PHILOSOPHICAL

WORKS

Of the late Right Honorable

HENRY ST. JOHN,

LORD VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE.

VOLUME III.

LONDON,
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LONDON:

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Mr Starkie

ESSAY

THE FOURTH.

SECTION XVI.

IF we inquire after the cauſes of that ſtrange multiplication of ſects, which have grown up, from the apoſtolical age to this, among Chriſtians, it ſeems to me that they are to be found in the metaphyſical madneſs of philoſophers mixing with the enthuſiaſm of the firſt Chriſtians, in the cabaliſtical practice of giving different ſenſes to the ſame paſſages of holy writ, in the uncertainty of tradition, and in the uſe that a diſtinct order of men has made, in every chriſtian ſtate, of theſe and other circumſtances to acquire dominion over private conſciences.

MEN run naturally from extreme to extreme. The farther they have gone into one, the more likely it is that when they recover from it they will hurry as far into another: ſo that reformation is often nothing more than a change of error. Thus it happened in the pagan theology. The profeſſors of it, and the people in general, had acknowledged a divine nature; which was human nature under a different name, and placed in a different habitation. Their divinities, from MOMUS the ſon of night, up to JUPITER the father of

gods and men, were in truth celeſtial and immortal men, endued with more knowledge, and with more and greater powers; but with all theſe after the manner of men, and diveſted neither of human paſſions nor of human vices. Theſe objects of adoration were monſtrous. So was the worſhip paid to them. But then, as faſt as philoſophers exploded theſe corporeal notions, for ſuch they may be properly called, of the divine nature, and endeavoured to ſpiritualiſe it in their thoughts by abſtraction from the human, they refined theology, with much confuſion and obſcurity of ideas, from a ſyſtem of phyſical into a ſyſtem of metaphyſical fables: and a ſort of intellectual mythology took the place of the former. Mythology, properly ſo called, ſerved in the infancy of ſcience to conceal the ignorance of philoſophers. Of the coſmogonia they made a theogonia. Such the poets taught; and multiplied polytheiſm by their ſuppoſed ſcience, and very real flattery. Allegory ſucceeded, and ſerved to conceal the abſurdity of theology. They who taught it grew as mad as their predeceſſors had been abſurd, and very little leſs profane. The few remains of pythagorean doctrines, the metaphyſical and theological parts of PLATO's writings, and above all thoſe of the latter Pythagoreans and Platonicians which are in our hands, will juſtify what is here advanced; for, ſurely, no men, who were thought to be in their ſenſes, and were ſuffered to go about without their keepers, did ever talk ſuch nonſenſe, as is to be found in PORPHYRY, PLOTINUS, JAMBLICUS, and

thoſe

thoſe who have been infected with the ſame phrenſy. Such of theſe philoſophers as oppoſed chriſtianity, oppoſed to the marvellous of this theology the marvellous of their own; and none of our angelical or ſeraphic doctors, none of our raviſhed myſtics, ever roſe higher in illuminations, viſions, and rapturous unions with the divinity, than ſome of them. On the other hand, many of theſe philoſophers became converts in different manners. Platoniſm mixed eaſily with chriſtianity: but they who retained moſt of the former, infected the latter with innumerable errors; and planted or watered all the hereſies that ſtarted up daily in the firſt ages of the church. Such were the Gnoſtics or the learned, who, under pretence of improving, corrupted the ſimplicity of the religion they had embraced. They who became afterwards the greateſt lights of the church, apologiſts, confeſſors, ſaints, and martyrs, were determined to chriſtianity by their philoſophy, as well as the others, and came full fraught with platoniſm into the holy pale. But they uſed it more modeſtly. They made it the hand-maid, not the rival, of chriſtianity: and tho this hand-maid governed the family, and took a principal ſhare in ordering the whole ſcheme and economy of it, yet the authority of the miſtreſs was always pretended. JUSTIN owns that platoniſm prepared him to be a Chriſtian: and ORIGEN, a man far ſuperior to the good martyr, ran as platonically mad, in the ſecond century, as PICUS of Mirandola, TICINUS, PATRICIUS, or any of the renowned

nowned platonicians, in the fifteenth. I know not whether the deſpair of attaining any other way a full knowledge of divine truths, which SOCRATES and PLATO had ſo often inculcated, might not diſpoſe theſe men to receive a revelation, to prefer faith to uncertainty, and, ſince they could not fix their minds on theſe ſubjects by reaſon, to fix them by authority, as the diſciples of PYTHAGORAS did.

THO I aſcribe ſo much to the mere influence of philoſophy, and believe it to have been the frantic mother of a frantic offspring, I do not mean to exclude abſolutely that of grace on this occaſion, tho I confeſs that I have no conception of it; nor to deny that this directed in ſome meaſure the other: and, to prove that I do not, I will quote the example and authority of St. AUSTIN, to ſhew how theſe two co-operated in him, and how the firſt prepared him, by God's immediate appointment, for the laſt, in one of the moſt ſublime articles of chriſtian faith. The ſaint laments, in the ſeventh book of his Confeſſions, the grievous errors in which he had been engaged concerning the divine nature, and the original of evil, on both of which he had followed the opinions of the Manicheans. He relates the ſteps by which he was delivered from theſe errors, as well as from the ſuperſtition of aſtrology and divination, and the approaches he made to truth by the helps that God procured him. After this, he breaks out into ejaculations of thanks to God, who had taken pity on him, and had procured him ſome books of platonic

tonic philoſophy, wherein he found the divinity of the Word eſtabliſhed by many arguments. Of the incarnation of the Word, indeed, he found nothing. But he found it afterwards in the ſcriptures, and he remained perſuaded that God had prepared him, by this accidental information, for what he was to learn, when he ſhould ſtudy the ſcriptures, concerning the humiliation of the Word made fleſh *; the reaſons of which perſuaſion he gives in the twentieth chapter. Thus you ſee how PLATO, in the wanderings of a wild imagination, had diſcovered, in part at leaſt, one of the greateſt myſteries of chriſtianity; and how God made uſe of this truth, which he who publiſhed it did not know to be ſuch, for the converſion of one of the greateſt doctors and ſaints of the church. What wonder is it that metaphyſics, the very dotage of philoſophy, ſhould bear witneſs to ſome of thoſe truths, which may come out of the mouths of babes and ſucklings?

SECTION XVII.

ANOTHER cauſe of the multiplication of extravagant opinions and ſects, in chriſtianity, has been the arbitrary practice of giving different ſenſes to the ſame paſſages of the bible. A practice de-

* Miſeratus es terram et cinerem — procuraſti mihi per quendam hominem, immaniſſimo typho turgidum, quoſdam platonicorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam verſos, et ibi legi &c.—Non quidem his verbis, ſed hoc idem omnino multis et multiplicibus ſuaderi rationibus, quod in principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum—in quos me propterea priuſquam ſcripturas tuas conſiderarem, credo voluiſti incurrere, ut imprimeretur &c.

rived from the jewiſh maſters, the worſt certainly that can be followed if we ſeek truth, and are deſirous to preſerve any preciſion either in fact or argument. Among the loweſt artifices, that have been employed by thoſe who ſeek to impoſe their own inventions under ſome other and better authority than their own, this has been one of the loweſt and groſſeſt, tho not the leaſt ſucceſsful. It is in truth a kind of forgery, ſince it ſerves to make an author ſay what he had no intention to ſay, or renders ar the beſt uncertain what he did intend to ſay when he writ with the greateſt clearneſs. The jewiſh rabbins have done by the Old, and our chriſtian rabbins by the New and Old teſtament both, what PETER did by his father's will in our friend SWIFT's Tale of a tub. The text was againſt him, but by a new combination of the ſame words, or ſyllables, or letters, he made it ſpeak for him and ſupport his claim. It had been well if MARTIN and JOHN, and the reſt of PETER's brethren, for he had many more, which the hiſtorian thought it not worth his while to mention, had ſtood their ground like good Caraites, and had adhered to the text in the plain and obvious meaning of it, inſtead of imitating the very men whom they have oppoſed, and whom they laugh at. But they have done otherwiſe. They have ſupported their deciſions by the ſame unjuſtifiable means, by which the rabbiniſt PETER ſupported his. Nay they have done more, they have admitted divers codicils, and have, like him, ſuppoſed them to be of equal authority with the will, tho it is plain that the father

ſpeaks

ſpeaks in the will, and his ſtewards or other domeſtics in the codicils. Allow me another compariſon: it may illuſtrate the folly, as the former explains the fraud, of this practice. The Chineſe reverence much the table of FOHI, which muſt be nine or ten centuries older than ADAM, according to their chronology. This table conſiſts of ſeveral lines, ſome ſhorter, ſome longer, and placed in a certain order like that of a diagram or ſcheme, ſerving, as they imagine, to the deſign or demonſtration of the moſt ſublime knowledge. The learned men among them have been employed ſeveral thouſand years in attempts to draw ſome of this ſublime knowledge out of the table. The way they have taken, and what other could they take if they had leiſure enough to take any? has been to make all the poſſible tranſpoſitions, and different combinations, of theſe lines, in hopes of affixing ſome ſenſe to this myſtical table. The conſequence has been, that they have affixed ſeveral, and that they agree in none. Now tho I am perſuaded that the accounts the Jeſuits * give us of this table are imperfect, and that ſomething more than barely theſe unequal lines, ſomething hieroglyphical at leaſt, belongs to it; yet whether it be ſo or no, the anecdote is equally appoſite to my purpoſe: for in either caſe, the chineſe and the chriſtian critics have been employed alike. If the table conſiſts of unintelligible lines, and it would be the ſame if it conſiſted of unintelligible words, whereof FOHI has given no clue to explain and de-

* Scien. Sinica.

termine the ſenſe, the chineſe critics have been employed juſt as reaſonably, as the chriſtian expoſitors of myſteries neither fully nor plainly revealed by revelation itſelf. If it be ſaid that the table, which none but he who made it could explain, explains itſelf, as our ſcriptures do in all the eſſential parts of them, the compariſon holds ſtill; for the learned Chineſe muſt have done, as the learned Chriſtians have done, and have made myſteries for ſome purpoſe or other where they found none. It is impoſſible by any means, that art can find, to ſee in the dark; but it is eaſy to contrive glaſſes that ſhall ſhew the plaineſt and moſt uniform object in a miſt, and under various forms in the cleareſt day. The firſt is a ſilly, and the laſt a knaviſh attempt. I ſaid juſt now that it was a kind of forgery. I do not recal my words, but add, that in the caſe here ſuppoſed the Chineſe are much more excuſable, than the Chriſtians; for if the Chineſe have forged different words of FOHI, Chriſtians have forged different words of God.

How can we lay leſs than this to their charge, when we conſider in how many different, remote, and inconſiſtent ſenſes, ſuch as deſtroy one another, and ſuch as are advanced on no authority but that of their own imaginations, they interpret the ſame paſſages of holy writ? There is, according to theſe doctors, a grammatical, a literal or hiſtorical, an allegorical or figurative, an anagogical or divine, and a tropological or moral, ſenſe. Some, or all of theſe, may be applied to the ſame ſentence, nay

to

to the ſame word. Light, in that noble paſſage of the book of Geneſis, where it is ſaid, "Let "there be light, and there was light," ſignifies very plainly, in the grammatical, literal, and only proper ſenſe, the corporeal light which God created, and concerning which alone it was at all to the purpoſe to ſpeak in that place. But divines, by their arbitrary power over the ſcriptures, make it to ſignify the Meſſiah allegorically, and tropologically or anagogically the inward light of grace, or the outward ſplendor of celeſtial glory. Thus again, by virtue of the ſame power, Jeruſalem, which is the name of a town, has been made to ſignify the viſion of peace, the church militant, the church triumphant, and the ſoul of a believer *. The ſenſe of no writings, neither ſacred nor profane, can be ever fixed, if they remain ſubject to ſuch licentious interpretations. Theſe interpretations have ſerved, and they could be intended to ſerve, by the Jews, who ſet, and by the Chriſtians who followed the example, no other purpoſe, than that of furniſhing the rabbins of both religions with means of giving a color of divine authority to all their own inventions. The abſurdities which the former have advanced on ſuch interpretations, ſeconded by thoſe of their oral law and cabala, and which you may find in our modern writers that were ſkilled in rabbinical learning, are innumerable, and paſs all meaſure of probability; ſo that one cannot help being aſtoniſhed, when ſome of our chriſtian divines

* Vid. CALMET.

lament

lament moſt piouſly the loſs of thoſe rules, according to which the Jews interpreted their ſcriptures, as they ſuppoſe; for that there were any ſuch ſtated rules obſerved is but ſuppoſition.

It is more probable that the Jews did as the Chriſtians have done; that they followed their ſeveral imaginations, or their ſeveral theological, and even ſecular intereſts. This was the caſe among Jews and Chriſtians both: and if it may be ſaid, which is not very clear however, that the latter have not fallen generally into ſo many puerilities and palpable errors as the others, the moſt unreaſoning, the moſt ignorant, and the moſt abſurd of men; yet they have rendered theology more voluminous, and, with reſpect to the divine nature and economy, more contentious, than it was before. St. Austin ſeems to aim at a ſort of compoſition about the interpretation of the ſcriptures, in a letter to Marcellinus *. He ſays, that "how good ſoever any reaſon may appear, it is falſe and deceitful if it contradicts them; and that how clearly ſoever we may think any thing deduced from them, if the thing be manifeſtly againſt reaſon, we are deceived; it is not the true ſenſe of the paſſages alledged: truth and they cannot ſtand in oppoſition." We may obſerve in this place, what is to be obſerved often in the writings of this ſaint, a gingle of words, that pretends to ſtrength and preciſion, and has neither really.

* Ep. cxliii.

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THE firſt propoſition ſuppoſes a caſe, that can never happen among reaſonable men, who have received the chriſtian revelation for genuine after a ſufficient examination of the external and internal proofs. Such men, having found nothing that makes it inconſiſtent with itſelf, nor that is repugnant to any of thoſe divine truths which reaſon and the works of God demonſtrate to them, will never ſet up reaſon in contradiction to it, on account of things plainly taught, but incomprehenſible as to their manner of being. If they did, their reaſon would be falſe and deceitful; they would ceaſe to be reaſonable men: and St. AUSTIN ſays nothing to the purpoſe, if he confounds theſe things with ſuch as imply contradiction; and means an oppoſition of reaſon to the former only. But if we could ſuppoſe, or if St. AUSTIN could mean to ſuppoſe, that they who followed the rule he lays down in another place, the rule of believing firſt, in hopes of underſtanding afterwards, ſhould diſcover things, when they came to examine in order to underſtand, that implied contradiction, his concluſion would be falſe. They would be obliged in this caſe to reject the revelation, not their reaſon; or to fall at once into a general and particular abſurdity: the general abſurdity of renouncing the faculties God had given them of diſtinguiſhing truth from falſhood, good from evil; and the particular abſurdity of renouncing, in favor of the internal, that very rule by which they had judged

ed in favor of the external proofs of this revelation.

THE ſecond propoſition admits and encourages the very practice we cenſure ſo juſtly, for which the ſaint was ſo famous, and by which he contributed ſo much to promote contentions in his own days, and to perpetuate them to ours. The practice of deducing doctrines from the ſcriptures, that are not evidently contained in them; for if they were evidently contained in them, they could not be ſaid to be deduced from them; is admitted. It is admitted, that theſe deductions may be manifeſtly againſt reaſon. Several ſuch there were, and among them ſome of his own. Reaſon is made the judge of doctrines thus deduced; but when reaſon condemns any, divines, the inventors or fautors of them, are at liberty to evade the objections they cannot anſwer, by interpretations of the ſame paſſages in ſome other and new ſenſe. Who does not ſee that the direct tendency of this practice is exactly the ſame as the event has proved it to be? It compoſes and propagates a religion, ſeemingly under the authority of God, but really under that of man. The principles of revelation are loſt in theology, or disfigured by it: and whilſt ſome men are impudent enough to pretend, others are ſilly enough to believe, that they adhere to the goſpel, and maintain the cauſe of God againſt infidels and heretics, when they do nothing better, nor more, than eſpouſe the conceits of men, whom enthuſiaſm, or the ambition

ambition of forming ſects, or of making a great figure in them, has inſpired. If you aſk now what the practice of the chriſtian fathers, and of other divines, ſhould have been, in order to preſerve the purity of faith, and to promote peace and charity, the anſwer is obvious, and ſo evidently agreeable to right reaſon, that the modeſteſt man alive might make it before an ecumenical council without bluſhing. They ſhould have adhered to the word of God: they ſhould have paid no regard to heathen philoſophy, jewiſh cabala, the ſallies of enthuſiaſm, or the refinements of human ingenuity: they ſhould have embraced, and held faſt the articles of faith and doctrine, that were delivered in plain terms, or in unequivocal figures: they ſhould not have been dogmatical where the ſenſe was doubtful, nor have preſumed even to gueſs where the Holy Ghoſt left the veil of myſtery undrawn. If the council ſhould decree that this anſwer was erroneous, and that the ſyſtem of chriſtianity would have been incomplete and inſufficient without theſe adventitious helps, let us make no ſcruple of ſaying that the council would decree blaſphemouſly, as more councils than one have done, ſince they would decree that infinite wiſdom had not proportioned means to ends, or that the ends of infinite wiſdom were more or other than the goſpel of CHRIST aſſigns.

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SECTION XVIII.

THE uncertainty of that precarious tradition, whoſe authority has been ſo magnified, may be ſet down as a third cauſe of the multiplication of doctrines and ſects in the chriſtian church. The truth of facts, however notorious, and even of thoſe that men have the leaſt intereſt or temptation to falſify, is truſted very unſafely to tradition. How much more unſafe muſt this conveyance be, when it is that of opinions and doctrines intricate, and therefore eaſily miſtaken; diſputed or diſputable, and therefore induſtriouſly miſrepreſented? BARROW, in his Expoſition on the creed, takes away this great foundation of theology; for tho he aſſerts that there are proper and ſufficient means to diſcern the genuine doctrines and dictates of chriſtianity, yet he leaves us in effect none but the writings of the evangeliſts, and the epiſtles of two or three apoſtles who had been diſciples. According to him and to right reaſon, the firſt and beſt way of preſerving doctrines is to preſerve them in the writings of the authors of them; tho even this cannot be deemed abſolutely ſecure. It is far from being certain that genuine peripateticiſm is every where plainly read in the writings of ARISTOTLE as they are come down to us: and if PYTHAGORAS and SOCRATES had writ, or if the works of Zeno were extant, we ſhould be beſt aſſured, better than any other way, what their philoſophies were;

were; but ſtill not without ſome poſſibility of error. Another way of preſerving doctrines is to preſerve them in the writings of diſciples that immediately received them from the authors. Thus the writings of PLATO and XENOPHON tell us, with a good degree of certainty, what SOCRATES taught: and yet theſe writings give very different and contradictory accounts of the ſocratic philoſophy. The next way that BARROW mentions is the preſervation of doctrines in the writings of thoſe who writ at larger diſtances of time, as thoſe of the Stoics were preſerved in the writings of CICERO, SENECA, and EPICTETUS. This way he allows to be more imperfect than the former, becauſe every writer is apt to miſapprehend and miſrepreſent; to do ſomewhat more than tranſcribe; to comment and deſcant; to adorn and ſet out, to confirm or confute the doctrine they relate, in order thereto repreſenting it with advantage to their purpoſe. The laſt way is that of oral tradition, the moſt liable to defect and corruption of any, according to this judicious expoſitor. Men do as before, and in this caſe with greater advantage, "accommodate doctrines "to their own prejudices, inclinations, and de-"ſigns. The farther ſuch tradition departs from "the original ſpring, the more ſubject it is to "contract ſuch alterations and impurities. Eve-"ry doctrine, thus propagated, is like a ſtream "at the head, ſmall and narrow, but clear and "pure. Proceeding on, it grows larger and "fouler. So tradition ſwells, by taking in what "oblique

" oblique chanels of private fancy and pragma-
" tical invention diſcharge into it; and, by re-
" ceiving tincture from particular inclination or
" politic deſign, it grows muddy and feculent."

THE genuine doctrines, and dictates of chriſtianity have not been conveyed to us by the firſt of theſe four ways; for the ſaviour publiſhed his goſpel by preaching, and by occaſional diſcourſes, and not by writing. But they have been preſerved by the ſecond; for two of the four evangeliſts had been diſciples from the firſt, and witneſſes, not only of all that had paſſed during his miſſion, but of his reſurrection. They had, therefore, received immediately from the author the doctrines they publiſhed in his name. Who the other two were, it is impoſſible to ſay with ſufficient aſſurance amidſt the fabulous or little authentic reports of eccleſiaſtical writers. But if MARK was the convert, the ſcholar, and the amanuenſis of PETER, his teſtimony comes nearer to that required under this head, ſince PETER was a diſciple, one of the twelve, than the teſtimony of LUKE, who belonged in all theſe relations to PAUL; ſince PAUL was no diſciple, neither one of the twelve, nor one of the ſeventy; had received nothing immediately from CHRIST; nor had any apoſtolical commiſſion, except that which he aſſumes in the Acts of the apoſtles written by LUKE, and dictated, probably, by himſelf. I ſay probably, becauſe it is poſſible LUKE might have been an

eye

eye and ear witneſſes of part of all he relates in the Acts, as St. JEROM obſerves; tho he could be no more than an hearſay witneſs of what he relates in the Goſpel, ſince he owns, in the beginning of it, that he writ, like many others, what he had been told.

WHEN divines urge, on this occaſion, that the differences between MATTHEW and MARK, as well as others, are accounted for, and an entire harmony of the Goſpels is eſtabliſhed, by critics, ſo that they all confirm one another; infidels, I know will cavil, and ſometimes plauſibly, againſt many things that muſt be aſſumed to make this harmony appear, and to reconcile theſe differences. When it is urged again, that the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt and an immediate inſpiration being beſtowed on all the diſciples in an eminent manner and alike, they are all to be eſteemed witneſſes alike; and they all received the doctrines of chriſtianity immediately from God, the author of it, tho not by the mouth of the ſaviour whilſt he was in the fleſh; I know too, that the ſame men will not remain without a reply. For inſtance, they will inſiſt that all this, if allowed, will prove nothing in favor of MARK nor LUKE, nor even PAUL himſelf, who were neither of the twelve nor of the ſeventy: after which they will add perhaps ex abundantia, that, none of theſe three having been deſigned by God to ſtand in the place of that diſciple who had betrayed JESUS, and to fill up the number of the apoſtles, MAT-

THIAS alone, with the eleven, could paſs in any ſenſe for one of thoſe diſciples who had received the doctrines of chriſtianity immediately from the author of them; tho the ſeventy might be, as it is ſaid they were, appointed to be witneſſes of the reſurrection. ERASMUS, in the firſt chapter of his Paraphraſe on the Acts, makes CHRIST ſay to all the diſciples, that the Holy Spirit, which he had breathed upon them, and which he promiſed ſhould deſcend upon them from above, would not only recal to their minds all he had taught them, but ſuggeſt likewiſe to them whatever elſe it might become neceſſary for them to know. But the cavillers of whom we ſpeak will urge that theſe words were added by ERASMUS, for reaſons very obvious, and are not contained in the text; nor is even the ſenſe of them implied ſo far, as to authoriſe the diſciples, and much leſs any that were not of their number, to add any thing to the conditions of ſalvation, that CHRIST himſelf had impoſed. Such cavils will be raiſed, I ſay: but they will deſerve to have little weight as long, as it is out of diſpute that we have in our hands the Goſpels of * MATTHEW and JOHN, who give themſelves to us for eye-witneſſes of all that CHRIST did, and of all that happened to him, and ear-witneſſes at the ſame time of all the doctrines he taught. Two chanels were as ſufficient as four to convey theſe doctrines to the

* N. B. I ſpeak of both alike, tho I am not ignorant of what has been ſaid that might weaken the authority of MATTHEW's Goſpel.

world,

world, and to preſerve them in their original purity. The manner too, in which theſe evangeliſts recorded them, was much better adapted to this purpoſe, than that of PLATO, or even of XENOPHON, to preſerve the doctrines of SOCRATES. The evangeliſts did not content themſelves to give a general account of the doctrines of CHRIST in their own words, nor preſume, in feigned dialogues, to make him deliver their opinions in his own name, and as his own doctrines: they recorded his doctrines particularly; they recorded them in the very words in which he taught them; and they were careful to mention the ſeveral occaſions on which he delivered them to his diſciples or others. If therefore PLATO and XENOPHON tell us, with a good degree of certainty, what SOCRATES taught, the two evangeliſts ſeem to tell us, with much more, what the ſaviour taught, and commanded them to teach. In a word, we may ſay, on theſe grounds, that the genuine doctrines of chriſtianity have been preſerved much better, than thoſe of heathen philoſophy, in the ſecond way of preſerving doctrines, tho they have not been preſerved in the firſt and beſt, as ſome of the others have been.

THE third and fourth ways of preſerving doctrines, which BARROW mentions, have ſo near a relation, that they may be thrown into one. They who decide about doctrines, or who write about them, at great diſtances of time from the firſt diſciples, are more eaſily impoſed upon by

traditions, and can more eaſily impoſe them on others. Both theſe things fell out: and no caſe can be well ſuppoſed, wherein the truth of fact, or the purity of doctrine, was ſo liable to be corrupted, or was in fact ſo much, or ſo ſoon corrupted, as in the propagation of chriſtianity. The mixed crowd of Jews and heathens that embraced it, and the very manner of propagating it, rendered this corruption unavoidable.

THE Jews had begun long before this time to corrupt their own religion. They had borrowed many ſuperſtitious opinions from Egypt, and the eaſtern nations: and pythagorean and platonic metaphyſics, which they had entertained after they became acquainted with the Greeks, and lived under the domination of the SELEUCIDAE and the PTOLEMIES, were imported both by them, and the heathen converts, into chriſtianity; by the helleniſt Jews more than by thoſe of Paleſtine, and by the heathen more than by either. Chriſtianity began in Judaea; it derived it's authority and it's proofs from the jewiſh ſcriptures, the authenticity and divinity of which it every where ſuppoſes. The author of it was a Jew: and as the religion he inſtituted tended not directly to deſtroy judaiſm, ſo the chriſtian church at Jeruſalem conformed long, as CHRIST himſelf had done conſtantly, to the ancient religion. On all theſe accounts, the jewiſh converts might regard chriſtianity as a branch of judaiſm, and take the ſame liberties of retrenching, of adding, of altering,

altering, with one, as had been taken with the other. They had acknowledged JESUS to be the Meſſiah foretold by their prophets. In this, they had gone beyond the Phariſees, who rejected him; as the Phariſees had gone, in receiving all the books of the Old teſtament, beyond the Sadducees, who received the Pentateuch, and rejected all the others. The Phariſees had added an oral to the written law. They believed the reſurrection of the dead, the immortality of the ſoul, future rewards and puniſhments, the metempſychoſis, and other doctrines utterly unknown to MOSES; which they accommodated ſome how or other to his law. They made up a new ſyſtem of theology by ſuch accommodations of the law to their traditions and their philoſophy. Why ſhould not the chriſtian Jews we ſpeak of make up a new ſyſtem, likewiſe, by blending all theſe and chriſtianity together, as they could beſt reconcile them? The example of PHILO, who did not profeſs chriſtianity indeed, but who found means to make the platonic opinions of the deity, and thoſe of MOSES agree, might encourage them in the attempt.

MUCH in the ſame manner the pagan converts might, and certainly did proceed. They found a great anology between the moſt ſublime and important doctrines of chriſtianity, and thoſe which ſome of their philoſophers had taught: and they might eaſily be led from hence to think that a ſameneſs of doctrine denoted a ſameneſs of authority.

thority. This will appear the more probable, if we consider that not only some heretics, but several of the most orthodox fathers, believed all those to be illuminated from above, who purified their minds, separated their souls as much as possible from their bodies, and died this philosophical death in order to arrive at a philosophical regeneration, according to the notions that metaphysical enthusiasm had established *. Thus JUSTIN the martyr makes CHRIST to have been known, in some sort, to SOCRATES †. It could not be otherwise. The soul of SOCRATES was a purified soul, and CHRIST the illuminating Word. St. AUSTIN was much of the same mind, and says little less than JUSTIN of this philosopher.

THE eclectic sect, which POTAMO founded about this time at Alexandria, might give farther occasion to the heathen converts to corrupt christianity. This sect professed a detachment from all sects, in the search of truth; they were

"Nullius addicti jurare in verba magistri."

They delivered themselves from the chains of philosophical bigotry. They might hold, some to one, and some to another system of philosophy in the main, as their different judgments or prejudices inclined them; but they asserted the reasonable liberty of embracing truth wherever they found it, and without any regard to the tenets

* PLATO, PLUT. JAMB. et alibi. Liberatio a corpore celebratissima mors est philosophica.

† Apol. i.

even

even of that ſect towards which they leaned the oftenest and the moſt. SOTION paſſed for a Stoic, and his ſcholar SENECA profeſſed himſelf ſuch §. Yet SOTION was fond of pythagorean doctrines, and SENECA ‖ made no ſcruple of borrowing from EPICURUS. PLOTINUS was a platonician, and yet he adopted doctrines, ſuch, we may preſume, eſpecially, as were ſubtile and myſterious, both from the Stoics and the Peripatetics. CLEMENT * was a Chriſtian, who taught chriſtianity by his public leſſons at Alexandria, and who defended it by his writings; and yet he approved this manner of philoſophiſing: we may conclude too that it was the method of that ſchool. AMMONIUS was the preceptor of PLOTINUS and ORIGEN. PLOTINUS deſerted chriſtianity, and bred up an inveterate enemy to it in PORPHYRY; or if he continued a Chriſtian to the laſt, as EUSEBIUS ſays ſomewhere that he did, for no better reaſon perhaps, than to keep a name of ſo great renown in the chriſtian catalogue, he dreſſed up his Chriſtian with ſo much pagan theology, that he might paſs for a profeſſor of either. ORIGEN, on the other hand, who had heard CLEMENT, as well as AMMONIUS, was ſuch a zealous Chriſtian, that he aſpired to ſuffer martyrdom, like his father, and did actually execute one ſort, that of caſtration, on himſelf; by which however he avoided another, that of temptation. ORIGEN ſignaliſed himſelf in the eclectic method. His warm imagination carried him into allegorical and ca-

§ SENEC. ep. LVIII. ‖ SENEC. paſſim. * Strom. l. 1.

 baliſtical

baliſtical interpretations of the ſcriptures; and his immenſe reading furniſhed him with a multitude of notions borrowed from pagan theology. Many of theſe he introduced into chriſtianity: and his book of principles was a repertory of the moſt extravagant opinions: heretical too they were declared by men leſs learned, leſs zealous perhaps, but certainly more politic, and more circumſpect in obſerving the courſe that orthodoxy took, than himſelf.

From what has been ſaid it is evident that ſuch a motley crowd of Jews and heathens, as the firſt converts to chriſtianity were, could not fail to mix a leaven of judaic and heathen theology into the chriſtian ſyſtem, and thereby to ſwell, to perplex, and ferment it. Had they kept cloſely to what the ſaviour taught, all this had been avoided: and, ſuppoſing chriſtianity to have been purely an human invention, it had been the moſt amiable and the moſt uſeful invention, that was ever impoſed on mankind for their good. But the extenſions of it, and the engraftments that were made on this divine ſtock, by mere human philoſophy, and by religious prejudices, already entertained, produced a ſyſtem, or rather cauſed divers ſyſtems to grow up, of fantaſtical theology. Chriſtianity, as it came out of the hands of God, if I may uſe the expreſſion, was a moſt ſimple and intelligible rule of belief, worſhip, and manners; which is the true notion of a religion. As ſoon as men preſumed to add any thing of their

their own to it, the human alloy corrupted the divine maſs, and it became an object of vain, intricate, and contentious ſcience. Such it continued to be; and the very manner, in which truth was propagated, ſerved to eſtabliſh error.

THE doctrines of chriſtianity, and the facts that proved the divinity of it, were publiſhed by diſcourſe, not by writing. CHRIST preached; he was the greateſt of preachers, and he ſent his diſciples out to preach *. They purſued their miſſion through different countries; and as faſt as they formed a church in one, they haſtened to another. At leaſt this was the practice of St. PAUL, who ſcattered about more ſpiritual ſeed than all the reſt, and more widely. PETER was a very itinerant miſſionary too, if we give credit to EUSEBIUS, which I do very ſeldom. This writer makes him travel over a great part of Aſia minor, and even to the people of Pontus; becauſe he ſpeaks of theſe nations, tho not of his preaching to them, in his firſt epiſtle. It is much more likely that he continued in Paleſtine and the neighbourhood, and that he never went even to Rome, whither you pretended catholics ſend him, that you may impoſe, as you have done without proof and againſt common ſenſe, the eccleſiaſtical tyranny of the biſhops of that ſee, his ſuppoſed ſucceſſors, on the chriſtian world. PAUL, indeed was a great traveller, as I have ſaid,

* Summus ille eccleſiaſtes.—Verbum et Sermo Dei. ERAS. De rat. concion.

moving

moving about from place to place almoſt continually during the greateſt part of the time that paſſed between his baptiſm and his death; that is, according to the calculation of ERASMUS, thirty five years. He went over the countries, where PETER taught, more than once. He had been in Arabia before. He viſited Greece and moſt of the iſlands. He penetrated beyond Thracia and Macedonia into Illyria. He returned into Paleſtine, and was ſent in chains from thence to Rome.

How theſe two apoſtles preached, for of the reſt we have no need to ſpeak, and ſhould have little to ſay, may be ſeen by their public diſcourſes recorded in the Acts, and might be gueſſed by the ſtyle and matter of their epiſtles. To ſhew how they ſucceeded in their miſſions, one example will be ſufficient. PAUL had preached eighteen months or two years at Corinth, and had ſettled a church there. The Corinthians did not renounce chriſtianity as ſoon as he had left them; but they corrupted it both in opinion and practice, and fell back into all their former habits of vice and debauchery. It was, on this occaſion, that the apoſtle writ his two epiſtles to the Corinthians, and in them we ſee the particular errors and abuſes that were grown in a ſhort time to a great head in that city. Among theſe it is to our preſent purpoſe to mention ſome. The taint of heathen philoſophy remained upon them; and they had contracted a gnoſtical contempt for the ſimplicity of the goſpel, and of evangelical teachers.

Falſe

False apostles from Judaea had introduced superstitious opinions and practices, and had persuaded them to regard the law of MOSES as necessary to be observed with that of CHRIST. They were divided into sects, and affected pre-eminence according to the dignity they ascribed to those by whom they had been baptised, to APOLLOS, to CEPHAS, to PAUL. For these, and for many other things, they are severely reproved in the first of the two epistles I have mentioned: and tho St. PAUL seems satisfied in the second with their submission and amendment, yet is it certain that the same errors and abuses continued or revived in the church of Corinth, and in others. JEROM * says in general, that even in his time the remains of them appeared in Achaia: and St. AUSTIN †, taking notice in particular of the superstitious washings of the feet, laments that the church of CHRIST was subjected to more than judaical servitude under the load of external observances.

It was easy to intermix, in this manner of promulgating the gospel, as many philosophical and pharisaical conceits, as the prejudices or purposes of the several preachers of it required: and when they were once well mingled together, as tradition varied those of one sort, or multiplied those of another, public writings and ecclesiastical authority were added to increase and perpetuate the confusion in which christianity was delivered

* Praefat. iii. lib. Com. in ep. ad Galatas.
† Ep. ad JANUARIUM.

down

down to poſterity, and in which it continues even at this day; a ſtate not to be quite paralleled by that of any other religion, as I believe; neither by the mahometan, however divided, nor by that of Foe, into how many ſects ſoever it has been broken among the eaſtern nations. But we muſt not imagine that the diverſity of ſects, and the oppoſition and confuſion of doctrines, which were principal, were ſole cauſes of the uncertainty of the traditions of the primitive church, or were cauſed ſolely by the manner of promulgating chriſtianity. Other cauſes of this diviſion and confuſion exiſted and concurred, either mediately through them, or by their own immediate effects, to corrupt tradition, and hinder the chriſtian ſyſtem from acquiring any appearance of conſiſtency.

SECTION XIX.

TO collect inſtances of all the extravagancies which were broached at that time, which almoſt choaked the tender ſhoots of chriſtianity, and which grew up with them, like weeds among the corn, would be endleſs and needleſs both. I will recal one alone of the enthuſiaſm that prevailed, and of the impudence with which ſome men impoſed on the ſimplicity of others. We find it in Paul's ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians. The effect of his firſt, whatever that was, encouraged him to write in this more plainly and more bitterly againſt the falſe teachers, and more highly in praiſe of himſelf, his authority, and his merit, which he ſcruples

ſcruples not to prefer to that of all the other apoſtles. On this occaſion it appears that the falſe teachers had the front to aſſure, and to make the firſt chriſtian converts believe, that they had an immediate communication with celeſtial beings. This gave them an air of ſuperiority to which St. PAUL thought it not proper to ſubmit, as indeed it was not, ſince that would have been to ſubmit his authority to theirs, and the goſpel he taught to the goſpels they taught. The leaſt he could do, and it is obſervable that his modeſty would allow him to do no more, was to oppoſe his own raptures and viſions to thoſe which theſe men pretended to have, and to declare that he too had been rapt up into the third heaven, either in body, or ſpirit, where he had learned things incomprehenſible and ineffable.

WHAT has been ſaid very ſummarily may ſerve, however, to ſhew that it was not poſſible, traditions derived from the firſt, and through the moſt early ages of chriſtianity, ſhould convey either facts or doctrines down with a due authenticity and preciſion, unleſs a continued miracle had ſubſiſted to alter the nature of things, and to produce effects repugnant to their cauſes. But there remain ſome circumſtances ſtill, which deſerve to be mentioned. It has been obſerved already that the fondneſs of the firſt Chriſtians for pagan theology carried them not only to borrow from it, but to forge books under the names of ſuch as had been famous divines in the eaſt, in Egypt, and elſewhere.

elſewhere. Even this did not content them. They not only introduced, with equal abſurdity and falſhood, theſe authorities to confirm the moſt ſublime myſteries of chriſtianity, and to teach men the way to ſalvation *, but they compoſed a multitude of different goſpels, not leſs, I believe, than forty, to give the authority of a divine original to all the fabulous traditions, ſuperſtitious practices, and extravagant doctrines, which were adopted, or invented by the different ſects. Thus the Gnoſtics had their goſpel; the Marcionites had theirs; the Valentinians had theirs, and even JUDAS ISCARIOT had his †. Apocalypſes, or books of revelations, were not ſo numerous; but of theſe too there were ſeveral. One of theſe particularly, the apocalypſe of St. PAUL, I could almoſt wiſh that we had, ſince it pretended to relate the ineffable things he ſaw in the third heaven. But it is loſt as well as others: and if that which we have under the name of St. JOHN had been loſt likewiſe, there might have been ſome madmen the fewer, and chriſtianity would not have ſuffered ſo much.

THERE was another practice in the primitive church, which may find its place properly enough here, becauſe it ſerved to corrupt the traditions of the church, and to fill the eccleſiaſtical annals with lying legends; tho it did not corrupt the doctrines of chriſtianity ſo directly as the others. The practice I mean is that of writing pious ro-

* Via ad ſalutem—indicata.

† Cod. apoc. Nov. teſtam. of FABRICIUS.

mances,

mances, under the pretence of writing the lives of ſaints, and the deaths of martyrs. This practice grew ſo frequent, and theſe romances were held in ſuch eſteem, that a certain eccleſiaſtic of the greek church, one METAPHRASTUS *, I think, publiſhed a treatiſe of criticiſm on the ſubject, and laid down rules for the compoſition of them. Chriſtian hiſtorians, like thoſe of Greece who wrote after the expedition of ALEXANDER, imagined they could never add too much of the marvellous to ſo many marvellous events. Their readers ſeemed to be of the ſame mind: and hiſtory became romance in order to pleaſe. Theſe hiſtories too of ſaints and martyrs were panegyrics, as well as romances, and had the ſame effect that TULLY aſcribes ſomewhere to the funeral orations of the Romans, which corrupted tradition firſt, and hiſtory afterwards. Well might they have this effect, when they were authoriſed by the greateſt and moſt admired fathers of the church; when ſuch a man as St. AUSTIN, for inſtance, read ſuch legends in the pulpit to his congregation, and kept and publiſhed accounts of miracles wrought by the relics of ſaints and martyrs. Since the preachers propagated theſe idle tales, it is not wonderful that the hearers believed them, and that pious lying became the voice of traidtion, in ages when any thing might be impoſed on chriſtian auditories, and that which was leaſt underſtood was moſt admired in them, according to the character given of theſe flocks by St. GREGORY of Nazianzum in a very remarkable anecdote re-

* Vid. BAILETT's Pref. to the Lives of the ſaints.

lated

lated by St. JEROM *. But theſe romances had an effect ſtill worſe; for they introduced into chriſtianity a ſort of polytheiſm and idolatry, too nearly akin to heatheniſm. Let not your zeal for the honor of ſaints, martyrs, and confeſſors make you think the expreſſion too hard. I can quote you one much more hard from ERASMUS, for whom you profeſs the ſame veneration that I have. In the preface to DE MARCA, before his Paraphraſe on St. PAUL's epiſtles to the Corinthians, after ſaying that "this apoſtle did not ſuffer any mortal to "be cried or preached up, nor the praiſe of the "goſpel to be transferred to men," he adds, "nunc quidem, velut antiquato CHRISTO, novum "idololatriae genus invehunt, ex hominibus, ut "ita loquar, deos facientes." The church, your church I mean, has aſcribed divinity little if at all better, than the heathen did. Some of your ſaints, tho they were not public debauchees, were very ill men: and if you conſult CYPRIAN, whoſe authority is ſo much reſpected, and for the ſame reaſon, by the chriſtian clergy of every ſect, you will find that they who ſuffered as confeſſors were very often men of the moſt profligate morals. If they were ſuch after their ſufferings, there is room to believe that ſome of the martyrs were ſuch before they ſuffered, and when they ſuffered.

No monuments can be more uncertain, none more precarious, than thoſe of chriſtian tradition. Other traditions grow more and more ſo by time.

* Ep. ad NEPOTIAN.

Theſe

Theſe were never more ſo than at firſt. Aſk your acquaintance doctor WATERLAND, whether he has found the tradition of the three firſt ages of the church direct, clear, and uniform in ſupport of the conſubſtantiality of the Son with the Father; which is a doctrine that he defends moſt ſtrenuouſly. He will aſſure you that he has found it to be ſo. He will not be able, however, to prove it any more, than biſhop BULL has done, after all his boaſts of the unanimity of the fathers, and even with the help of forced conſtructions, and indirect proofs. As little will he or any other divine be able to defend, on this authority, ſeveral doctrines, that they hold, or to juſtify themſelves for not holding ſeveral that they reject. Even your divines, who lay ſo much ſtreſs on tradition, are pleaſed to abandon it, as well as ours, in caſes wherein it ſeems to carry the greateſt authority, becauſe it is immediately derived from the apoſtles. Thus, I believe, that abſtinence from blood, which was enjoined as much as abſtinence from fornication by the apoſtles in a ſolemn council, is at this time required by no doctor, except doctor DELANY. Thus again there are, I ſuppoſe, very few millennarians left, if even Mr. WHISTON be ſtill of the ſame opinion, tho the year one thouſand ſeven hundred and twenty is paſt, and the millennium not begun. In ſhort, by partial traditions they can prove or diſprove any thing; by univerſal traditions almoſt nothing. This very doctrine of a millennium was oppoſed at the cloſe of the ſe-

cond century *: and a certain prieſt, one CAIUS, who believed that the apocalypſe aſcribed to St. JOHN was writ by CERINTHUS, aſcribed this opinion not to the evangeliſt, but to the heretic. JEROM, AUSTIN, GREGORY the great, or the ſaint as he is called with leſs reaſon, and divines much more modern than theſe, have interpreted the paſſages of the apocalypſe, that eſtabliſh the millennium, in another ſenſe: and a man, who ſhould profeſs to expect it at this day, or to believe the doctrine, would be treated as a viſionary. But yet we muſt, I think, receive this tradition, ſo generally rejected; or reject all traditions, even thoſe as generally received.

LET me ſay ſomething more, which occurs to me on the ſubject of the millennium. IRENAEUS is a father much quoted and much reſpected. IRENAEUS had ſeen PAPIAS and POLYCARP, and was himſelf a diſciple of the diſciples of St. JOHN. All theſe were millennarians: and thus the firſt authors of apoſtolical traditions taught this doctrine as apoſtolical. JUSTIN the martyr, and TERTULLIAN, were millennarians likewiſe. JUSTIN was the firſt father, I believe, who took notice of the apocalypſe, aſcribed it to St. JOHN, and founded his belief of the millennium upon it, in the dialogue with TRYPHON. TERTULLIAN goes farther. He maintains the apocalypſe againſt the Marcionites; and affirms that the new Jeruſalem, to be built by the hand of God, and to deſcend

* EUSEB. Hiſt. eccleſ. lib. iii.

from

from heaven, was known to EZEKIEL, and had been ſeen by the apoſtle St. JOHN; nay, that the plan, or model of it, had been ſeen in his time ſuſpended in the air forty days together, that it might be known again, when it ſhould actually exiſt on the earth. Let it not be ſaid that I inſiſt on the authorities of a weak man, and of a madman. I might do ſo, in this caſe, with as good reaſon, as divines have for inſiſting on them in ſo many others. But the point I inſiſt upon is this. The doctrine of the millennium was an apoſtolical doctrine, and taught as ſuch by the immediate ſucceſſors of the apoſtles. It was oppoſed, indeed, near two centuries afterwards, by an obſcure prieſt, who denied it to be the doctrine of St. JOHN, becauſe he denied St. JOHN to be the author of the apocalypſe. But the doctrine was founded on original tradition, as well as on the apocalypſe: and therefore, whatever interpretations were made of theſe revelations in after-times, the tradition was too freſh to be ſhaken. What ſhall we ſay now? Were the traditions concerning the millennium of doubtful authority in the firſt ages of the church? In that caſe, tradition is no rule at all. Were they uniform? How comes this doctrine to be exploded?

THE third and fourth ways, that is the two worſt, of preſerving doctrines, which BARROW mentions, have ſo near a relation to one another, that one is the neceſſary conſequence of the other. They, who decide about diſputable and diſputed facts or doctrines, at great diſtances of time, may

may be eaſily impoſed upon by tradition, and may eaſily impoſe by authority. Tradition is all that time growing corrupt. If it become falſe, they decide and they write falſely; if uncertain, uncertainly. The nicean council decided againſt ARIUS: and yet, if we give credit to PETAVIUS, whom it was more eaſy to ſilence by authority, than to refute by fact and by reaſon, the fathers of the three firſt centuries were little better than Arians. How came the fathers of the fourth to decree ſo poſitively and ſo preciſely in favor of a conſubſtantiality, about which the tradition had been neither poſitive, preciſe, nor unanimous; tho biſhop BULL has ventured to aſſert, that the antenicean fathers had agreed on this ſubject "ad unum?" Could any man, who had not the front of a controverſial writer, affirm in this manner, when he knew, as BULL knew, that eighty fathers who condemned PAUL of Samoſata, denied the homoouſion or conſubſtantiality of the Son with the Father?

WILL it be urged, that the four goſpels are as old, and even older than tradition; that the orthodox doctrine concerning the trinity is eſtabliſhed in them, and in the other ſcriptures of the New teſtament, by all which tradition is to be controlled and corrected? I apprehend that the anſwer will not be ſufficient. Some will aſſert that the ſcriptures, far from eſtabliſhing the nicean doctrine, vindicate, by their whole tenor, the ſupremacy of the Father, and declare the ſubordination

nation of the Son. But let it be that the goſpels received into the canon are favorable to the orthodox belief; how do we know that the other goſpels were exactly conformable to theſe, on a matter of ſo much nice definition? Might not our learned and ſubtile theology find the taſk infinitely harder, if we had thoſe goſpels, to create an harmony between three or four dozen, than between four? The council of Laodicea admitted four, and rejected all the reſt. But it is very poſſible that this council might proceed, as councils have generally done, under the influence of an eccleſiaſtical faction, and decree accordingly; or elſe on ſome ſuch reaſons as IRENAEUS called a demonſtration *. "There are four parts of the world. "There are four cardinal winds. There have been "four covenants, under ADAM, NOAH, MOSES, "and CHRIST. There can be but four goſpels "therefore." I omit ſome other proofs, juſt as demonſtrative as theſe, upon all of which he did, and the council might, determine that there could be neither more nor leſs than four goſpels; tho ſeveral traditions authoriſed ſeveral others.

THE truth is, that as every man, in the moſt early days of chriſtianity, judged of his own inſpiration, and of the gifts of the Spirit he received, ſo every church judged of the inſpiration of authors, and of the divine authority of books. The firſt led to the laſt, and thoſe authors were deemed inſpired, and thoſe books were canoniſed, in which

* Lib. iii.

every particular church found the greateſt conformity with her own ſentiments. It is aſtoniſhing to conſider how far this extravagance was carried. To conſider, for inſtance, that CLEMENT of Alexandria ſhould look on an apocalypſe of PETER as genuine, and it ſhould be rejected afterwards. That St. PAUL ſhould inſert in his epiſtles ſeveral paſſages of the apocalypſe of ELIAS, as ORIGEN aſſures us that he did, and it ſhould be refuſed admittance into the canon. But it is ſtill more aſtoniſhing to obſerve how much reſpect ORIGEN himſelf had for the viſions of HERMAS, and the oracles of the SIBYL, as well as others of the fathers. IRENAEUS, having cited the former, uſes this expreſſion, "ſcriptura pronunciavit *:" and honeſt JUSTIN, in his Admonition to the Greeks, exhorts them in a moſt ſolemn manner to believe the antient and venerable SIBYL, who was extraordinarily inſpired "by almighty God."

I CONCLUDE from the little that has been ſaid on a moſt voluminous ſubject, that as tradition furniſhes very precarious anecdotes to thoſe who write at great diſtances of time, ſo it may become difficult, nay impoſſible, to aſcertain the authority even of books that were written, perhaps, at the time they ſuppoſe themſelves to have been written, if the attempt to fix their authenticity, and to reduce them into a canon, is made at a great diſtance of time. They may be neither received nor rejected on grounds abſolutely ſure. They may be

* Lib. iv.

rejected

rejected at one time, and received at another: a remarkable example of which we find in the adventures of the apocalypſe. Whether this book was writ by JOHN the evangeliſt, JOHN the prieſt, CERINTHUS, or ſome other viſionary, it paſſed for a compoſition of the evangeliſt's, and maintained great credit as ſuch in the church for ſome centuries before the council of Laodicea. This council left it out of the canon in the year three hundred and ſixty: and altho aſiatic biſhops might paſs, in this caſe, for judges more competent than thoſe of the weſt, the council of Carthage put it into the canon in the year three hundred and ninety ſeven. Some ſpaniſh councils, and others, I believe, in the weſt did the ſame. Anathema, that convincing argument, was employed againſt all gainſayers: and as the miſt thickened, it was univerſally admitted into the canon of the New teſtament.

To ſum up the whole in one ſhort propoſition. Eccleſiaſtical tradition has been, from the firſt and pureſt ages, founded, for the moſt part, in ignorance, ſuperſtition, enthuſiaſm, and fraud. He who pretends to clear the reverend fathers, by whom tradition was principally conveyed down from age to age, and to deny this charge, muſt be very ignorant himſelf, or very impudent. Sometimes they ſhew their learning, like JUSTIN, who took the inſcription SEMONI DEO SANCTO, on the ſtatue of a god of the Sabines, for an inſcription on the ſtatue of SIMON the magician. Sometimes their logic, and the ſtrength of their reaſoning ta-

lents are extremely like to thoſe of IRENÆUS in his famous demonſtration of the neceſſity of four goſpels. Sometimes they are as ſober as CYPRIAN, who rehearſed to his church in the morning the viſions and dreams he had in the night, and who conſulted little children in their extaſies, when he had none of theſe himſelf *. Sometimes they are as

* As extraordinary as this may ſeem, it will not ſurpriſe thoſe who have read the confeſſion, aſcribed to him, and publiſhed among his works in the benedictine edition of them. The great St. CYPRIAN, for ſo our divines, as well as yours, affect to call him, had been a rhetorician before his converſion, and was after it an admirer of his countryman, TERTULLIAN, whom he called his maſter, and ſome portion of whoſe works he uſed to read every day, according to an anecdote mentioned by St. JEROM a. Now ſince he formed his ſtyle on this model, and on the taſte of his age, we may well expect to find, what is found in his writings, much hyperbole, much ſpiritual bombaſt, and all the flowers of falſe eloquence. We find them very eminently in that extraordinary piece, his confeſſion. There he gives an account of his education, of his initiation into all the myſteries of paganiſm, and of his admiſſion into all the ſecrets of the blackeſt and moſt diabolical magic. Believe me, ſays the ſaint, I ſaw the devil himſelf; believe me, I embraced him, I converſed with him, and was eſteemed one of thoſe who held a principal rank about him. He adds, that the devil made him many compliments and promiſes, gave him a band of infernal ſpirits to command, and at the end of this firſt viſit aroſe from his throne, and accompanied the young JAMBRES with a politeneſs that ſurpriſed all thoſe who ſaw it. He deſcribes his perſon, his dreſs, and the ſpirits that attended his court in material forms, with which they were ſupplied by the ſteams of ſacrifices. He deſcribes afterwards the wonderful feats he performed, whilſt he was a magician, and all the abominations of which he was guilty. But finding at laſt that the devil, and all the powers of hell had not been able to debauch JUSTINA, a chriſtian virgin, for whom his friend AG-

a Lib. De ſcrip. eccleſiaſt.

LAIDAS

as ſagacious as AMBROSE, who had viſions and dreams too, and who had beſides them the faculty of

LAIDAS had a ſtrong inclination, and whom CYPRIAN himſelf ſeems to have liked very much, he renounced the devil and all his works. He ſet him even at defiance. You tremble, ſaid the ſaint, at the name of CHRIST: the ſign of his croſs deprives you of all power: how would you ſtand his preſence? Thus the devil was put to confuſion. But CYPRIAN fell into deſpair, till his friend, EUSEBIUS, comforted him, carried him to the biſhop, and made him not only a Chriſtian, but one of the greateſt lights of the church.

SOME divines would find, in all this, no reaſon to object to CYPRIAN's authority. On the contrary, they would exalt this confeſſion, and the public ſhame which the penitent took to himſelf, as an illuſtrious proof of the ſincerity of his converſion. Such divines might, perhaps, go farther, and ſhew, by way of corollary, not only againſt the Novatians, that Chriſtians who had apoſtatiſed might be received to repentance, but alſo that the moſt wicked of Pagans might become a ſaint. They would not, however, be able to ſolve this dilemma: "Either CYPRIAN believed what he reported to be "true, or he knew it to be falſe. If he believed it true, he "was a madman. If he knew it to be falſe, he was a liar; "and neither in one character, nor in the other, a fit paſtor "for the flock of CHRIST."

OTHER divines, both of your church and of mine, are very unwilling to own that this confeſſion is CYPRIAN's. They would gladly father it on ſome other perſon, no matter on whom. His writings do not only give, like thoſe of the other fathers, a ſeeming authority to many of the doctrines that they teach; but he was in particular a zealous aſſertor of the dignity and power of biſhops, and of the whole eccleſiaſtical order. The papiſts, indeed, have moſt uſe for this father: and his book De unitate eccleſiae alone, nay, one ſingle paſſage of it would ſuffiſe to make him a favorite in the church of Rome. The paſſage I mean is that, wherein, after he has quoted the words of CHRIST to PETER [a], tho he acknowledges

[a] MAT. c. xvi.

that

of diſtinguiſhing the relics of ſaints and martyrs by certain emotions that they cauſed in him. Some-

that all the apoſtles received the ſame powers, he adds [b], "tamen ut unitatem manifeſtaret, unitatis ejuſdem originem ab "uno incipientem ſua auctoritate diſpoſuit—ſed exordium "ab unitate proficiſcitur, et primatus PETRO datur, ut una "CHRISTI eccleſia et cathedra una monſtretur." The reputation of ſuch a witneſs in favor of papal primacy, and epiſcopal authority, in the middle of the third century, is to be ſupported at any rate; and by conſequence this piece is not to be aſcribed to him, if the prieſthood can hinder it by oppoſing the moſt improbable, to the moſt probable reaſons.

We know nothing of the man till he became a Chriſtian. St. AUSTIN [c] indeed ſpeaks of him, as if he had read his confeſſion. "Mutatus eſt CYPRIANUS," ſays this ſaint of his countryman, "cujus hodie memoriam frequentamus——Ipſe "ſcribit, ipſe teſtatur cujus vitae fuerit aliquando, quam nefa"riae, quam impiae, quam improbrandae, ac deteſtandae." The author of the confeſſion could almoſt alone deſerve ſuch epithets; and it is extremely probable that PONTIUS, a prudent deacon, and the antient biographer of CYPRIAN, paſſed over in ſilence all that preceded his converſion, as if it had been unworthy to be mentioned, but in truth that he might not be obliged to ſay any thing of this important confeſſion. His modern biographer, a benedictine monk, who publiſhed the edition of CYPRIAN's works, which BALUZIUS had begun, is not ſo eaſily embarraſſed. He pretends that there were two CYPRIANS, the great St. CYPRIAN of Carthage, and a little St. CYPRIAN of Antioch, whoſe name is likewiſe preſerved in eccleſiaſtical monuments. He inſiſts on a poem, which PHOTIUS reports that the empreſs EUDOCIA wrote about a CYPRIAN and a JUSTINA who ſuffered martyrdom at Nicomedia, and which contained many things that are imputed to the CYPRIAN we ſpeak of by St. GREGORY of Nazianzum in his eighteenth ſermon, tho they could not belong to him. On this foundation the monk aſſumes that St. GREGORY confounded the antiochian with the carthaginian CYPRIAN, and did

[b] JOH. c. xx. [c] Serm. 311.

not

Sometimes they are as cautious and exact in their reports of miracles, as AUSTIN was, who ſays on that important queſtion, whether St. JOHN died or not; "that the people of Epheſus, men of ſenſe, "and not light of belief, had aſſured him that "the ſaint was buried in their town; but that he "lay in his grave like one who ſleeps in his bed, "and that the earth which covered him roſe and "ſunk, as the bed-clothes do over one who ſleeps "and breathes." To conclude, they were ſometimes as ſincere and honeſt as JEROM. The ſincerity of this great doctor may be ſeen in this inſtance. He pretended that angels had ſcourged him ſeverely for his attachment to profane authors; and to ſhew that he had not dreamed it, he appealed to the marks that remained on his back *. His honeſty may be ſeen in this. The fathers

not know on whoſe feſtival he preached. Our learned FELL had objected that no one of this name is to be found among the biſhops of Antioch: no wonder, ſays the learned benedictine, for as there were two CYPRIANS, there were two Antiochs, the great Antioch ſo famous in hiſtory, and a little private Antioch, concealed in Phoenicia, and ſcarce heard of in any public records. It ſeemed incredible to FELL that St. GREGORY, who had been ſo well inſtructed in eccleſiaſtical affairs by his pious father, and who had been at Nicomedia and in the neighbouring country, ſhould know nothing of this antiochian CYPRIAN, but apply the whole of this confeſſion to the carthaginian. It will avail little, I ſuppoſe, to affirm that GREGORY was come newly to Conſtantinople, and that he preached without ſufficient preparation and information: ſo that I may continue to believe, as I do believe, it more probable that theſe critics go about to deceive us, than that St. GREGORY was deceived himſelf, and impoſed on his auditory.

* Ep. ad EUSTOCHIUM.

were

were apt to employ, like rhetors, falſe reaſons and falſe authorities. JEROM commends the practice, avows it, and gives rules for it. Nay he makes PETER and PAUL guilty of it in their famous diſpute, which gave occaſion to another between him and the biſhop of Hippo.

IF we were obliged to ſearch for the articles and grounds of faith, and for the meaſures of obedience, in this myſtery of folly and iniquity; if we were to collect our chriſtianity from dark paſſages of ſcripture, that admit often of no ſenſe, and often of ſeveral, and that are rendered more uncertain and obſcure by eccleſiaſtical traditions, and by ſuch divines as have been mentioned, our caſe would be bad indeed. But ſuch an abſurdity cannot be in the order of an all-wiſe providence. God has dealt more graciouſly with his creatures. The kingdom of theology is the kingdom of darkneſs: and to enjoy the true light of the goſpel, we muſt fly from it. To believe that JESUS was the Meſſiah is ſaid by ſome to be the "unum neceſſarium" of faith; but to obſerve the laws of nature is certainly the "unum neceſſarium" of duty. About this ſummary of faith and duty there can be no very reaſonable doubt. Scripture, tradition, and theology all conſpire to eſtabliſh them; altho the two laſt endeavour to add to them, and to perplex them.

SEC.

SECTION XX.

BUT it is time we ſhould proceed to the laſt cauſe I aſſigned of the multiplication of ſects, and the confuſion of doctrines, which have rendered theology the corruption of religion and the bane of ſociety, by the abuſe which a diſtinct order of men has made of religion to acquire dominion over private conſcience, and, by that ſpiritual, a great ſhare of temporal, dominion in every chriſtian ſtate. With this I ſhall conclude all I have to ſay concerning authority in matters of religion, and ſhall plead the cauſe of it ſucceſsfully, I hope, againſt thoſe infidels who charge it unjuſtly.

THAT religion is neceſſary to ſtrengthen, and that it contributes to ſupport government cannot be denied, I think, without contradicting reaſon and experience both. This ſome men have been extravagant enough to do directly: whilſt others, with whom alone we ſhall meddle here, have contradicted reaſon and experience juſt as much, in a manner more likely to impoſe, and therefore more likely to do hurt, by propagating falſe conceptions of the Supreme Being, by perplexing the notions of religion, and by aſſociating to it ſuch as are really diſtinct from it. From hence all the evil conſequences, that are imputed to religion, have flowed immediately: and it is neceſſary, therefore, in defence of it, to diſtinguiſh clearly between

between what is really religion, and what has been induſtriouſly, and is now habitually, confounded with it, and made to paſs for it.

Civil obligations are impoſed by the laws of man; religious obligations by thoſe of God; and as the authority of the legiſlator is far greater in one caſe than in the other, ſo is the ſanction of the law, eternal puniſhments in another life, inſtead of temporal pains and penalties in this. If it be ſaid that, beſides this difference, we are to conſider how much religion has a farther influence than civil government can have, becauſe the former reaches to the inward diſpoſitions of the heart and mind, whilſt the other goes no farther than to regulate outward conduct; I ſhall neither deny the propoſition, nor admit all the uſe that is made of it: but I ſhall conclude from thence, how neceſſary it is to the peace and welfare of mankind, that they be kept from jarring, which cannot be effectually prevented, unleſs the entire power of both remains in the ſame hands. As long as natural religion is alone concerned, this ſhould not ſeem ſo difficult; but when revealed religions are eſtabliſhed, the difficulty becomes almoſt inſuperable. The principles and duties of natural religion ariſe from the nature of things, and are diſcovered by the reaſon of man, according to that order which the author of all nature, and the giver of all reaſon, has eſtabliſhed in the human ſyſtem. From hence too would ariſe the inſtitutions of civil government in a natural

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ſtate, if the minds of legiſlators were not corrupted previouſly by ſuperſtition. In theſe caſes, religion and civil government ariſing from the ſame ſpring, their waters would be intermixed, they would run in one ſtream, and they might be eaſily confined to the ſame channel, if revelation did not introduce myſterious doctrines and rites, which it becomes ſoon a trade to teach and to celebrate.

NEITHER nature, nor reaſon, could ever lead men to imagine two diſtinct and independent ſocieties in the ſame ſociety. This imagination was broached by eccleſiaſtical ambition; and when it was once broached, it was ſure to be propagated by the ſelf-intereſt of a whole order of men in every country, and by the ſuperſtition of all the reſt. A reſpect for religion begat a reſpect for this order. The idea of religion came to be aſſociated to that of church, or rather to be confounded with it: and church came to ſignify this order of men even excluſively. This church, this religious ſociety, grew up in ſome countries to be the tyrant, in others to be the rival of the ſtate, on the authority of pretended revelations among the heathens: and it is a melancholy truth, that the ſame monſtrous growth has been ſeen and felt, on the pretended authority of real revelations, among Chriſtians. Such is the knavery and ſuch the folly of mankind, that no example, antient or modern, pagan or chriſtian, can be produced of ſuch an order of men once eſtabliſhed, that has not

not aimed at acquiring from their inſtitution, and that has not acquired, ſooner or later, immoderate wealth and exorbitant power.

FEW men are ſo little acquainted with the hiſtory of the chriſtian world, as not to know that the wealth of this church is equal, at leaſt in many countries, to that of the egyptian church; that the influence of the antient could not be greater than that of the modern magi over all ranks of men; and that the biſhop of Rome has exerciſed, even over kings in many countries, a power, which he claimed in all, of the ſame nature with that of the ethiopian church over kings of one country.

A RELIGIOUS ſociety, by which is meant, on this occaſion, a clergy, is, or is not the creature of the ſtate. If the firſt, it follows that this order, no more than others, which the ſtate has inſtituted for the maintenance of good government, can aſſume any rights, or exerciſe any powers, except ſuch as the ſtate has thought fit to attribute to it; and that the ſtate may, and ought to keep a conſtant control over it, not only to prevent uſurpations and abuſes, but to direct the public and private influence of the clergy in a ſtrict conformity to the letter and ſpirit of that conſtitution, the ſervants of which in a much truer ſenſe they are, than, what they affect ſometimes to call themſelves, the ambaſſadors of God to other men. If the laſt is ſaid, if it is aſſerted that the church

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is in any ſort independent on the ſtate, there ariſes from this pretenſion the greateſt abſurdity imaginable, that I mean of imperium in imperio: an empire of divine in an empire of human inſtitution. It is in truth ſo expreſsly contained in the very terms of the aſſertion, that none of the tedious ſophiſtical reaſonings, which have been employed for the purpoſe, can evade or diſguiſe it.

One of theſe I will mention, becauſe it has a certain air of plauſibility, that impoſes on many, and becauſe, if it cannot ſtand a ſhort and fair examination, as I think it cannot, the whole edifice of eccleſiaſtical independency and grandeur falls to the ground. It has been ſaid then, that religious and civil ſocieties are widely diſtinguiſhed by the diſtinct ends of their inſtitutions, which imply neceſſarily diſtinct powers and a mutual independency; that the end of one is the ſalvation of ſouls, and that of the other the ſecurity of temporal intereſts; that the ſtate puniſhes overt acts, and can puniſh nothing elſe, becauſe it can have cogniſance of nothing that paſſes in the mind, and does not break out into criminal actions; but that the church, employing her influence to temper the paſſions, to regulate the inward diſpoſitions, and to prevent ſins, as well as crimes, is that tribunal at which even intentions are to be tried, and ſins, that do not ripen into crimes, nor immediately affect civil ſociety, are to be puniſhed.

Now in anſwer to all this we may deny, with truth and reaſon on our ſide, that the avowed ends of religious, and the real ends of civil ſocieties, are ſo diſtinct as to require diſtinct powers, and a mutual independency. The ſalvation of ſouls is not the immediate end of civil government: and I wiſh it was not rather the pretence than the end of eccleſiaſtical policy. But if to abſtain from evil, and to do good works, be means of ſalvation, the means of ſalvation are objects of civil government. It is the duty of princes and magiſtrates to promote a ſtrict obſervation of the law of nature, of private and public morality, and to make thoſe who live in ſubjection to them good men, in order to make them good citizens. For this purpoſe, the balance and the ſword are put into their hands, that they may meaſure out puniſhment to every one who injures the community, or does wrong to his neighbour: and a rigorous puniſhment of crimes, eſpecially if it be accompanied with rewards and encouragements to virtue, for both are entruſted to the ſame men, is the ſureſt way, not only to reform the outward behaviour, but to create an habitual inward diſpoſition to the practice of religion.

A CLERGY might co-operate with the civil magiſtrates, very uſefully, no doubt, by exhortations and reproofs, whereof they are ſeldom ſparing, and much more by example, which can alone give efficacy to the former, and which is not, however,

ever, very frequently employed. This they might do as aſſiſtants to the civil magiſtrate, in concert with him, and in ſubordination to him. To what purpoſe, therefore, do they claim and affect independency on him? Greater power never did, nor can enable them to do greater good. On the contrary, it always has, and always muſt divert them from the proper buſineſs of their profeſſion, create ſcandalous ſtrife with the civil power, and embarraſs the whole order of government. Would they erect a tribunal to puniſh intentions? The very pretence is impertinent. Would they erect it to puniſh, where no injury is offered, nor wrong done? The deſign is unjuſt and arbitrary. The ideas of crimes are determinate and fixed. The magiſtrate cannot alter them. The ideas of ſins are more confuſed and vague; and we know by long and general experience how they vary in the minds, or at leaſt in the writings of caſuiſts. Would they erect ſuch a tribunal to try the orthodoxy of men's faith? Such an one is erected in ſome countries, under the name of the inquiſition, and is juſtly deteſted in all. A tribunal, with all the powers of the inquiſition, may extirpate hereſy, or rather propagate hypocriſy by the moſt abominable ſpecies of tyranny. A tribunal of this ſort, that has powers leſs coercive, may teaze, and vex, and irritate mankind. It may multiply ſects, render them more obſtinate by perſecution, and bring all thoſe evils on the world which atheiſts object to religion: but the former can never procure a real, nor the latter

even an apparent uniformity. To what end and purpoſe then can ſpiritual courts, and coercive powers attributed to the clergy, ſerve, unleſs it be to make them judges and parties in their own cauſe, when matters of intereſt are concerned?

SECTION XXI.

I INSIST on this point the more, not only becauſe it leads directly to what I ſhall have occaſion to ſay in the latter part of this eſſay, but becauſe I would take off the maſk of eccleſiaſtical ambition, which even ſome of our own divines put on. Thoſe of your church have laid it aſide long ago, and contend openly for eccleſiaſtical tyranny. The principal difference among them ſeems to be, whether this tyranny ſhall be that of a monarchy, or of an ariſtocraſy. Honeſt LAUD went as far, at leaſt, as the moſt moderate of yours, and was frank enough to own his principles and aims. The ſeveral revolutions that have happened in our church and ſtate have rendered the firſt too unpopular, to be directly avowed; and the latter too viſibly impracticable, to be entertained. The bait, however, is tempting, and therefore even they nibble at it, who fear the hook. What they are not ſuffered to attempt in practice, they maintain in ſpeculation: they inſinuate principles, which may ſerve to re-eſtabliſh eccleſiaſtical power and independency on the ſtate, in ſome more happy conjuncture; and they do all this ſafely whilſt

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ſeeming modifications, and ambiguous expreſſions, hinder moſt men from diſcerning the conſequences of what they advance, and ſome even from knowing again in their writings the ſame doctrines that they had condemned in the writings of others.

AMONG all the fallacies which have been employed by churchmen, who have thought it neceſſary to ſoften the abſurdity, and to anticipate objections, one of the moſt abſurd has been advanced, tho not invented, by a paradoxical acquaintance of yours; and it is, to maintain the independency of the church, and to ſuppoſe, at the ſame time, a ſort of original contract between the church and the ſtate, the terms of which every whimſical writer, even this ſcribler, adjuſts as he pleaſes. They who contend for abſolute monarchy in the ſtate endeavour to explode the notion of an original contract between the prince and the people, becauſe the terms of it are eaſy to be aſcertained. They know, thoſe of them at leaſt, who are not as mad as FILMER, know, that all the rights and powers, which a prince can have, muſt be derived originally from the people. They know, therefore, that the terms of ſuch a contract, generally made, and always implied, may be ſufficiently aſcertained by reaſon, by law, and by cuſtom, notwithſtanding any previous and divine right, which it may be ſuppoſed that princes have to govern. They know too that the whole body of the people, and no particular order of men, are to judge of the obſervation of

this contract. But they who contend for the independency of the church on the ſtate are ready to aſſume ſuch a contract, becauſe the pretence may ſerve to delude the ſtate, in ſome countries, and can never embarraſs the church in any. By admitting it, the ſtate acknowledges an original independency in the church, derived from a greater authority than her own; and the ſuppoſed terms of union may be conſtrued to be rather conceſſions of the religious ſociety to the civil, for the ſake of order and peace, than grants of the civil to the religious ſociety. Thus religion and the church are ſet on the ſame foot; no human authority can alter one, but muſt receive it in the terms in which it has been revealed: and ſo may a good caſuiſt prove, on this hypotheſis, that no human authority can meaſure out any conditions of eſtabliſhment to the other. Thus the ſtate becomes nothing better than a co-ordinate, but inferior power.

The ſtupid fellow, who advanced this paradox in engliſh, did not ſee how ill the parts of it hang together; nor that, if eccleſiaſtical government was, by divine appointment, independent of civil, no ſuch contract, as he ſuppoſes, could be made. The religious ſociety, notwithſtanding their known moderation, could not have departed from that independency and ſuperiority over the civil power, which God had given them. But the truth is, they were glad to get an eſtabliſhment in the empire at any rate: and when a fortunate

tunate conjuncture had made the emperor think that they might be of use to him, it happened, as it often has happened, that the auxiliaries usurped on him, or his successors at least, on the prerogatives of the crown, and on the liberties of the people. In short, if there had been any alliance between the church and the state on this occasion, it must have been such an alliance as never was heard of before nor since. It must have been an alliance without any treaty, for there certainly was none: and all the advantages, which the religious society acquired afterwards over the civil, were mere usurpations: for usurpations by fraud are as really such, as usurpations by force; and these were carried as far as legislative authority.

The church advocates beyond the Alps may be a little more impudent, but they are much more consistent, than some on this side. That voluminous compilation of decrees of councils and of popes, of resolutions of fathers, of apostolical constitutions, and of other ecclesiastical authorities, composes a body of law, according to them, which the church had a right to enact without the concurrence of the state, and which is, however, obligatory on the state, and on every member of the state, as far as they are concerned in it. This, I say, is impudent; but it is consistent with the notion of a religious society of divine institution, and therefore independent; and may be easily defended on that principle. But where we shall look for the conditions of that

original contract, which was made between the religious and the civil ſociety, I know not; unleſs we ſuppoſe them written on the back of CONSTANTINE's grant to SYLVESTER, and preſerved in that grand repertory of forgeries, the records of the roman church. We ſhall not find them in the canon law. The French, as good papiſts as they are, admit this in part only; and the quarrel between PHILIP LE BEL and BONIFACE the eighth may be ſaid to ſubſiſt even now. We, who have ſhook off the roman yoke entirely, admit ſtill leſs of this eccleſiaſtical code; for we reject every thing in it, that is not conformable to the law of the ſtate, and to the doctrines of the church which this law has eſtabliſhed.

THIS imaginary contract, in ſhort, whether well or ill made, never exiſted, at any time, nor in any country; tho' to have been real, and really authoriſed, it ſhould have been the ſame at all times, and in all countries, where chriſtianity was propagated. Political ſocieties make, and alter, and break their alliances, as the varying reaſon of ſtate ſuggeſts. Different orders of civil government, in the ſame ſociety, change, and with them the whole conſtitution of ſuch governments, as reaſon or paſſion, the intereſts or diſpoſitions, of men determine them. But a religion given by God is in it's nature invariable: and therefore, if a religious ſociety, with certain privileges, immunities, and prerogatives, be neceſſary to preſerve it ſo, the order and conſtitution of

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ſuch a ſociety muſt be invariable too. The church muſt be eſtabliſhed by the ſame divine authority as the religion, and be by conſequence independent on the ſtate. But nothing of this kind has been. CHRIST's kingdom was not of this world. He ſent out his apoſtles to teach and to baptiſe; and the utmoſt power he gave them, beſides that of working miracles to convince and to convert, was to ſhake off the duſt of their feet, and to proteſt againſt the infidelity of thoſe, who refuſed to receive them and the goſpel they publiſhed. The apoſtles ordained others to accompany and to ſucceed them in the ſame office, the office of teaching and baptiſing. The apoſtles could give no more power than they received; and no argument of right can be drawn from any thing that paſſed, nor from any thing that theſe men did for the maintenance of their ſect, whilſt chriſtianity was a ſect. As little argument of right, or of independency, can be drawn from the impolitic indulgence of civil governments, that, embracing the religion, admitted the teachers of it into a legal eſtabliſhment, with all the extraordinary powers they had enjoyed whilſt they were leaders and heads of a ſect. I call it indulgence, becauſe the religious ſociety had no original right to any ſuch powers; becauſe the ſect could not preſcribe in ſuch caſes to the ſtate; and becauſe they were not admitted by any treaty, but by the goodwill and ſole authority of the civil government. I call this indulgence impolitic, becauſe it encouraged eccleſiaſtical ambition, laid the foundation of all the uſurpations

pations of the church on the state, destroyed the effect of religion by theology, and made even christianity a grievance, as will be shewn immediately.

SECTION XXII.

CHRISTIANITY had not been established many centuries in the west, before a claim to universal property was set on foot in favor of the faithful, that is of Christians; nor before the bishop of Rome claimed universal empire, not only over the religious, but over all civil societies. St. AUSTIN shall vouch for what I advance here on the first head: and what I say on the second has public notoriety for it's voucher. The saint, in a letter to MACEDONIUS *, takes notice of a passage in the Proverbs of SOLOMON †, which runs to this effect in the septuagint version. "To the faithful man belongs a whole world of riches; to "the infidel or unfaithful, not even a farthing ‖." What sense the passage may receive, I enquire not: but this is the comment of St. AUSTIN upon it. "We have a property in that which we possess of "right; we possess of right what we possess justly; we possess justly what we possess well; "whatever is ill possessed therefore belongs to "another; but he possesses a thing ill, who makes "an ill use of it." On this admirable foundation the good bishop establishes the right of such saints

* Ep. cliv. ed. Basil. † Prov. xvii. 6.
‖ Fidelis homini totus mundus divitiarum est; infidelis autem nec obolus.

as himſelf, "fideles et pii quorum jure ſunt om-"nia," to the property of the whole world. The right is in them, tho the iniquity of the unrighteous poſſeſſors be tolerated. "Toleratur iniquitas "male habentium, et quaedam inter eos jura "conſtituuntur, quae appellantur civilia." This however he is willing to connive at for the ſake of preſent expediency, inſtead of inſiſting on an immediate ceſſion of all this wealth, or on an actual repeal of all the laws of civil government. His words are ſo gracious that they deſerve to be quoted. "Sed tamen etiam hic non intercedimus, ut "ſecundum mores legeſque terrenas non reſtitu-"antur aliena" etc. I believe this great doctor of the church appears to you, as he does to me, a caſuiſt fit for VENNER and the tribe of the fifth monarchy: and I cannot perſuade myſelf that he was ſo inconſiſtent, as to refuſe any eſtates, or other donations, that were offered to the church, or to reſtore any that had been given, tho it has been aſſerted, I remember not on what authority, that he did ſo.

THUS early, and thus violently, did a ſpirit of avarice poſſeſs the religious ſociety: and we may eaſily conceive what a ſpirit of ſtupid bigotry and implicit reſignation poſſeſſed the laity at the ſame time, when a little biſhop of Hippo durſt advance ſuch doctrines, as I have quoted, to ſuch a man as MACEDONIUS. He might be encouraged to make the claim by the practice of the firſt Chriſtians; for among them all things were in common: the

the rich ſold their poſſeſſions, and laid the whole price at the feet of the apoſtles. I ſay the whole price; and I add that it was ſtrictly exacted, as we may aſſure ourſelves from the example of ANANIAS and his wife SAPPHIRA *. They might have kept their eſtate, or the whole price they had ſold it for. But when they brought it, in imitation of the zeal of other Chriſtians, to the apoſtolical chamber or treaſury, it became a fraud to keep back any part of it. Leſs than the whole would not ſatisfy the church: and St. PETER accuſes them accordingly of fraud, and of lying to the Holy Ghoſt; becauſe they had given no more than they could ſpare, and had owned no more than they had given. The puniſhment followed inſtantly: they were both ſtruck dead. It appears that great collections were made, and every church had a common purſe. By theſe means they ſupported their poor: and every man, who embraced chriſtianity, being ſure not to want bread, the goſpel was more effectually propagated, and great numbers of the loweſt rank of people were brought into the pale. Another pious uſe of eccleſiaſtical wealth was to maintain the teachers and miniſters of the word. We ſee, by St. PAUL's epiſtles, that they were ſo maintained in their ſeveral miſſions: and this apoſtle, in writing to the Corinthians, when he diſtinguiſhes himſelf from others, and values himſelf above them on many accounts, inſiſts particularly on this, that he had preached gratis, and taken nothing from them. He had a trade, and he

* Acts c. v.

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maintained himſelf by it; for which reaſon ERASMUS calls him, as I remember, "coriarius ponti-"fex," the leather-dreſſing pontiff.

IT was not zeal alone, that brought an immenſe wealth to the church, even in the firſt centuries. An opinion that the end of the world was near, made the rich more indifferent to riches, that they were not to enjoy long, or that were not to remain long in their families. This opinion the clergy promoted: and the laity was ſo ſilly, as not to ſee that, if it was not worth their while to keep their eſtates, it was not worth the while of churchmen to be ſo ſolicitous to acquire them. The end of the world ſeemed to be fixed at the diſtance of about two hundred years, in the beginning of the fourth century, according to LACTANTIUS*, who wrote at that time: and yet this motive had ſuch effect, in conjunction with a multitude of other artifices employed by the religious ſociety to the ſame purpoſe, that in this very century a law to reſtrain eccleſiaſtics from obtaining donations and wills in their favour was become neceſſary. Not only VALENTINIAN and GRATIAN, but even THEODOSIUS, made edicts for this purpoſe: and the practice of inveigling weak people, devout women particularly, to defraud their right heirs, and to give their eſtates to the church, was ſo public, ſo frequent, and ſo infamous, that the church, who had permiſſion to hold theſe eſtates, thought it prudent to

* Omnis expectatio non amplius quam ducentorum videtur annorum. Inſtit. l. vii. c. 25.

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ſubmit to ſome appearance of reſtraint in acquiring them. I ſay appearance of reſtraint, becauſe we may conclude that means were found of evading this very reſtraint, from the experience of our own age; and becauſe it is fair to conclude that none were neglected of heaping up wealth in thoſe ages, when biſhops themſelves were the greateſt uſurers. This wealth was ſuch that it proved a principal cauſe of the perſecutions of the church, as father PAUL obſerves *, from the reign of COMMODUS: and we know that DECIUS, who was a great and a good prince, as princes went in thoſe days, and as they go in ours, attempted nothing more at firſt, than many chriſtian princes have executed. He attempted to ſeize the treaſure of the church at Rome. LAWRENCE, a deacon of that church, broke his meaſures. He put LAWRENCE to death, and the ſeventh perſecution began on that occaſion; for which his memory has been perſecuted by chriſtian writers; as that of CHARLES MARTEL has been by the monks, who ſent him to hell for taking ſome of the wealth of the church to defend both the church and the ſtate againſt the Saracens.

ABUNDANCE of matter offers itſelf to us on this head. But the immenſe wealth of the clergy, their inſatiable thirſt after it, the uſurpations and other ſcandalous methods by which they acquired it, and the no leſs ſcandalous uſe they made of it, are now ſo well known, that it would be loſs of time to enter into any great detail on the ſubject.

* Hiſt. of benefices.

A gene-

A general obſervation or two will be ſufficient for our purpoſe. Biſhops found pretences and means of taking to their own uſe the revenues that had been appropriated to the poor, the churches, and the inferior clergy, as well as to them; and left the charge of maintaining all theſe on the laity, who had provided for them once already. The laity were ſo ſimple as to take the charge upon them, inſtead of obliging theſe lords of the religious ſociety to keep to the original appropriation. Hence aroſe the divine right of tithes, and a multitude of other exactions. But if the laity thought that their pockets were to be picked no more, they were ſoon undeceived. The ſecular clergy, living no longer in communities, gave more public ſcandal, and became leſs fit to excite the charity of the faithful. A new clergy, therefore, aroſe: and monks and monaſteries began about the year five hundred. The former were not all prieſts, indeed, at firſt. But the latter were retreats of men who obliged themſelves to live in theſe convents, that I may ſpeak with exact propriety, a cenobitic life, under the conduct of the prieſts, and in all the ſuppoſed regularity and auſterity of the firſt Chriſtians. Theſe profeſſions and engagements ſtruck the imaginations, and rowſed the zeal of the faithful; and convents were endowed with as much profuſion as if nothing had been yet done for the church. Theſe orders degenerated apace; and as faſt as they did ſo new orders were founded, and endowed, under the ſame pretence. Nothing was taken from thoſe who had forfeited the conditions

ditions of the grants made to them, and much was given to thoſe who took new engagements, and kept them as ill. Thus eccleſiaſtical policy contrived to enrich the church even by the corruption of the clergy, and to carry theſe abuſes forward in an uniform gradation, and with an equal pace.

THE claim St. AUSTIN made to the riches of the whole world, as belonging of right to the elect, had not been made, I ſuppoſe, before his time; tho IRENÆUS had juſtified the robbery of the Egyptians by the Iſraelites, on principles much the ſame. This claim too was neither publicly aſſerted by himſelf, nor by his cotemporaries, nor by his ſucceſſors, nor at any time by the church in form: the reaſon of which was, no doubt, that they ſaw how needleſs and imprudent it would be to give ſuch an alarm to all mankind, when they might go on to plunder particular countries and families without reſiſtance, tho ſometimes againſt law; and always with very great effect. This the religious ſociety did, before it had any pretence of alliance with the civil, or any eſtabliſhment in the roman empire: and it is aſtoniſhing to conſider, tho we meet with the examples and proofs almoſt in every page of hiſtory eccleſiaſtical and civil, how an order of men, inſtituted to teach a religion of ſo much purity, ſanctity, and detachment from all worldly intereſts, could convert this very inſtitution into a ſordid trade, and make other men believe that the beſt of good works was to enrich this order, and the greateſt of ſins to take any thing

thing from it. This continued to be the caſe, however, near fifteen centuries, without any conſiderable interruption. During ſo long a courſe of time, the principles of the goſpel were ſo forgotten, and ſo perverted, that ſalvation was a merchandiſe bought and ſold in every eccleſiaſtical ſhop, in that of Rome above all. This ſhop had ſo much cuſtom, that a pope of the fourteenth century, JOHN the twenty ſecond, the inventor of annates and many other exactions, left behind him, by VILLANI's account, which father PAUL quotes in his Hiſtory of benefices, eighteen millions in ſpecie, and ſeven millions in plate and ingots. An immenſe ſum in any age, eſpecially in that when the Weſt Indies had not been yet diſcovered.

THE abuſe grew to be moſt exorbitant in the moſt devout ages of the church, that is, in the ages of greateſt ignorance and ſuperſtition; for then the clergy had perſuaded men, and the more corrupt they were, the more eaſily they were perſuaded, that all ſorts of crimes might be committed ſafely by thoſe who ſubmitted to the ſlight penances and pecuniary mulcts, which the church impoſed, either arbitrarily, or according to a book of rates. When, I ſay, that crimes might be committed ſafely on theſe terms, I mean ſafely from divine vengeance; for the man whom the church pretended to ſcreen from this would have been condemned at any human tribunal, and was ſo, I doubt not, often to the gallows or the rack. Thus

the great ſanction of revealed religion was taken away by artificial theology and eccleſiaſtical fraud: and a great part of the objections that infidels urge againſt it receive a color from the doctrine and practice of that religious ſociety, whoſe independency and divine inſtitution are pleaded for ſo ſtrenuouſly.

THE religious ſociety was ſo far from being by any right independent on the civil, or from treating with it in form, and being incorporated with it on ſpecific terms of alliance, when chriſtianity became in a fortunate conjuncture the eſtabliſhed religion of the empire, that this ſociety grew into power, and into riches, as is has been ſaid already, by degrees; by indulgence and conceſſions on one hand, by art and management on the other. Claims precede acquiſitions in the natural and ordinary courſe of things. But in this caſe acquiſitions preceded claims. The church, indeed, made a claim to power, when ſhe was firſt eſtabliſhed; but it was to ſpiritual power. Nothing elſe was avowed; nothing elſe was ſuſpected. The civil ſociety did not ſee that ſpiritual power was power over opinion, and that this was power over conſcience; or, ſeeing it, did not enough conſider how this power might extend and increaſe, how it might rival and ſubdue their own. But as ſoon as the church had drawn a great part of the affairs of civil government into her own tribunal, under the notion of ſpirituals, or of things appertaining to ſpirituals; as ſoon as ſhe had acquired a pre-

ſcriptive

ſcriptive right of employing the civil power in ſpiritual quarrels, and the ſpiritual power in civil. She claimed a ſovereign and univerſal authority, ſeized the two ſwords into her hands, and ſharpened the edge of both.

SECTION XXIII.

THE good effects of maintaining, and the bad effects of neglecting, religion, had been extremely viſible in the whole courſe of the roman government. NUMA, the ſecond founder of Rome, contributed more to the proſperity and grandeur of that empire, than the firſt founder of it, ROMULUS, and all the warrior kings who ſucceeded him; for NUMA eſtabliſhed a religion, directed it, as others, both kings and conſuls, did after his example, to the ſupport of civil government, and made it the principle of all the glorious expectations that were raiſed in the minds of that people. This religion was very abſurd; and yet by keeping up an awe of ſuperior powers, and the belief of a providence that ordered the courſe of events, it produced all the marvellous effects, which MACHIAVEL, and writers more able to judge of them and of their cauſes than he was, POLYBIUS, CICERO, PLUTARCH, and others aſcribe to it. The inward peace of that government was often broke by ſeditions: Rome was in diſtreſs at home whilſt ſhe triumphed abroad, and at laſt the diſſolution of the commonwealth followed a long and bloody ſeries of civil war. But the neglect of re-

ligion, not religion, was a principal cauſe of theſe evils. Religion decayed: and the ſtate decayed with her. She might have preſerved it; but even in her decay ſhe gave it no wounds, nor feſtered like a poiſon in any.

THIS example, many others, and the reaſon of things were ſufficient to make ſuch a man as CONSTANTINE ſee the neceſſity of reviving and reforming the antient religion of Rome, or of eſtabliſhing a new one; in ſhort, of taking in the aſſiſtance of ſome religion or other to purſue more effectually the great deſigns of his ambition. His rivals in the empire were Pagans: and paganiſm did more than begin to be no longer a proper band of ſociety. The ſuperſtitious opinions and practices of it were as much in vogue in his time, as they had been in the beſt ages of Rome; but they were not directed, as they had been in thoſe ages, to the ſupport of civil government. The virtue of old Rome, and the ſpirit of her religion, fainted when her liberty expired: and they were wholly extinguiſhed in the time of CONSTANTINE, by a long courſe of tyrannical dominion ſeldom interrupted, by the venality of the ſenate now and long before inured to ſlavery, by the ferocity of the armies, by the licentiouſneſs of the provinces, and by that independency on the authority, as well as diſregard to the majeſty, of the empire, which prevailed in both.

ON the other hand, chriſtianity, born, if I may ſay

ſay ſo, in a deſert, and educated in a little province of the empire, had ſpread thro the whole in the courſe of three centuries. The progreſs of it was not ſo immenſe, perhaps, as TERTULLIAN repreſents it in his hyperbolical ſtyle. But it was great, and Chriſtians under one denomination or another were numerous in every part of the eaſt and weſt. Paganiſm was worn out in one ſenſe, in theory, if not in practice; the impoſtures of it were detected; the abſurd doctrines and rites were expoſed to ridicule. The prieſts could not defend it, and the philoſophers explained it away. It lay expoſed like an unfortified country, and, as the empire did ſoon afterwards, to every incurſion. Chriſtianity was freſh and vigorous. The apparent ſanctity of thoſe who profeſſed this religion, the courage of thoſe who died for it, and the zeal of thoſe philoſophers and rhetors who were converted to it and writ for it, were more than ſufficient to defeat the calumny raiſed againſt it. They were more than ſufficient, I mean, to defeat it among all ſuch, as, finding it to be calumny in ſome inſtances, looked no farther, but deemed it to be the ſame in all. Among others, and in general, the very name of Chriſtian continued to be odious long. A ſpirit of enthuſiaſm prompted many on one ſide to revile and diſturb the rites of an eſtabliſhed religion, to provoke the heathen, to rejoice in ſufferings, and to court martyrdom. A ſpirit of party, inflamed by reſentment, tranſported the other ſide to exerciſe the greateſt cruelties, by ſudden popular emotions, as well as by regular au-

thoriſed perſecutions. But as ſoon as the chriſtian faith and worſhip, by being tolerated firſt, and legally eſtabliſhed ſoon afterwards, became better known, the groſſeſt calumnies that had been propagated againſt them began to die away even among the vulgar. Theſe calumnies had been ſuch as could not bear examination; more groſs, if that be poſſible, than any of thoſe which Chriſtians have propagated againſt the heathens, the Jews, the Mahometans, or even againſt one another in their ſeveral ſects. One may eaſily conceive that the detection of theſe turned to the advantage of chriſtianity, and that patience under this kind of perſecution, as well as fortitude and perſeverance under another, did honor to the profeſſors of this religion, and prepared the way to the eſtabliſhment of it.

THERE is another circumſtance of the ſame tendency, which deſerves to be mentioned. Whilſt the Chriſtians were confounded with the Jews, or paſſed for a ſect of that religion, they ſhared the hatred and contempt which that nation had contracted. But they diſtinguiſhed themſelves ſoon in a manner, that took off all prejudice of this kind from them, and ſhewed the wiſdom and policy of St. PAUL's conduct in declaring himſelf the apoſtle of the Gentiles, to whom the kingdom of CHRIST was opened, and who were heirs of the promiſes, as well as the Jews. On this popular principle chriſtianity was propagated: and one of the firſt edicts, that CONSTANTINE publiſhed, in favor of

of chriſtianity, was a very ſevere one againſt Jews who ſhould inſult Chriſtians, and Chriſtians who ſhould turn to judaiſm. The Jews were no longer a choſen people: their nation was rejected; and all the nations of the earth were invited to partake of the ſame privileges, the ſame graces, and the ſame ſalvation. Thus the chriſtian religion was made the religion of mankind, by the firſt principles of it, even whilſt it was a ſect: and therefore CONSTANTINE might think very reaſonably, that to embrace and eſtabliſh it would be an effectual mean of uniting mankind under his government. He might think this eſtabliſhment the more eaſy to be made by his authority, becauſe the myſteries of chriſtianity were more ſublime and more refined, and therefore more proper objects of veneration, than thoſe of paganiſm, tho many of them had been borrowed from it; and becauſe the external worſhip of the new religion might be rendered, if that ſhould be thought neceſſary, as pompous, and as fit to draw the attention of the people, as that of the old, by adopting ſome of the ceremonies and uſages of the old: which adoption the chriſtian church had already begun to put in practice.

ALL this was done: and no man, who conſiders what influence not princes only, but private men raiſed to the head of parties, have had in the change of religions, will think it was hard for CONSTANTINE to do it when he had perſuaded his troops that they beat MAXENTIUS under the enſign of the croſs, and when he diſputed the empire

with LICINIUS, the declared enemy of the croſs afterwards. Chriſtianity became the eſtabliſhed religion of the empire, and heatheniſm, in it's turn, a perſecuted ſect, baniſhed from the cities by CONSTANTINE and his ſucceſſors, and forced to hide it's head in villages and hamlets. Whilſt gentiliſm, or the religion of nations, was the eſtabliſhed religion, chriſtianity maintained itſelf in moſt of the cities of the empire. But as ſoon as this religion had taken poſſeſſion of the court and the cities, the other became ſo generally that of peaſants only, that the appellation of paganiſm did, probably enough, take it's riſe from thence.

THIS great revolution was effected in part by the circumſtances I have mentioned, and by others that favored the growth of chriſtianity. The imperial authority did the reſt, but did it ill, ſo ill, that the chief of thoſe political views, which CONSTANTINE had in making this eſtabliſhment, were defeated by it; and the admiſſion of a religious ſociety into the ſtate, in the manner in which he admitted it, was the cauſe of all the eccleſiaſtical and theological evils that have followed from his time to ours, and that are ſo falſely imputed to religion itſelf. We may be aſſured that the ſociety co-operated with the court to bring about a revolution ſo much to their advantage, and thought themſelves happy enough to be dependent, not independent, on the emperor; his inſtruments, not his allies; whatever appearances he might give or ſuffer them to aſſume in

thoſe

thoſe ſolemn eccleſiaſtical farces, wherein he condeſcended to act, in ſome reſpects, a ſecond part. This ſuppoſition is eaſily reconciled to hiſtory: and if it was leſs ſo, hiſtory would be only the more inconſiſtent. We ſhould never perſuade ourſelves that ſuch a man, as it repreſents CONSTANTINE to have been, was a bigot as much as HELENA, or reverenced prieſts as much as ſhe did relics. He was not a bigot, tho the church has made him a ſaint; nor a bubble of eccleſiaſtical policy, tho it ſeems to me that he was ſo of his own. But whilſt he recalled to his mind, as he did moſt probably, the great ſervice religion was of to antient Rome, he ſeemed to forget that, when that religion floriſhed, and was of ſo much ſervice to the ſtate, it was under the immediate inſpection of the ſtate. There was no council, but the ſenate, to define doctrines, nor to regulate diſcipline: and men were at the head of religious, becauſe they were at the head of civil adminiſtration; inſtead of being at the head of the latter, becauſe they were at the head of the former.

WE cannot doubt that the political views of CONSTANTINE, in the eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity, were to attach the ſubjects of the empire more firmly to himſelf and his ſucceſſors, and the ſeveral provinces and the ſeveral nations, that compoſed it, to one another, by the bonds of a religion common to all of them; to ſoften the ferocity of the armies; to reform the licentiouſneſs of the provinces, and, by

by infuſing a ſpirit of moderation and ſubmiſſion to government, to extinguiſh thoſe principles of avarice and ambition, of injuſtice and violence, by which ſo many factions were formed, and the peace of the empire was ſo often and ſo fatally broken. Now no religion was ever ſo well proportioned, nor ſo well directed, as that of chriſtianity ſeemed to be, to all theſe purpoſes. It had, indeed, no tendency to inſpire that love of the country, nor that zeal for the glory and grandeur of it, which glowed in the breaſt of every roman citizen almoſt, whilſt the commonwealth was in ſplendor. But it recommended, what CONSTANTINE liked better, benevolence, patience, humility, and all the ſofter virtues, ſubjection to the civil powers as to the ordinances of God, and paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance. Theſe it recommended: and theſe, it is ſaid, the Chriſtians had practiſed, not only whilſt they lay under the ordinary hardſhips impoſed upon them, but under the extraordinary ſeverity of ten perſecutions, wherein eccleſiaſtical writers boaſt, how truly may be doubted, that thirty biſhops of the church of Rome alone were martyriſed *.

SUCH

* ECCLESIASTICAL, like all other party writers, deſerve little credit when they relate facts, or draw characters, which may ſeem to reflect honor on thoſe of their own ſide, and to render their adverſaries odious. That Chriſtians were ſometimes perſecuted, is a point out of diſpute. But whether theſe perſecutions were ſo frequent, ſo ſevere, and ſo unprovoked, as they ſtand repreſented, is a point very diſputable. If ſome of the emperors, and thoſe not of the worſt, uſed the Chriſtians ill;

Such doctrines and such examples might well encourage CONSTANTINE to think that nothing could

ill; others, and those not of the best, shewed them favor. ORIGEN, who was the son of a martyr, and who aspired to be such himself, asserts[a], I think, that they, who suffered for their religion, were few. The authority is good, and the matter of fact probable. Whoever considers the temper and character of sects, of religious sects especially, and of the primitive Christians among others, will think it probable that, whenever they were punished by the heathen magistrates, they were ready to impute their punishment to their christianity, and to complain of persecution. Their clergy were, under pretence of religion, a very lawless tribe, and paid little regard, on many occasions, to the government whose subjects they were. They usurped the part of civil judges, they assumed the power of making wills, they took possession by fraud, or violence, of the estates of others; and not content to break the laws in such instances as these, which may be called private, they broke them in the most public manner, and instigated others to break them by popular insurrections against the legal authority of magistrates, and by tumults, and riots, in which they insulted not only the established religion of the empire, but even their own religion, as it was practised by those who differed from them in any points of doctrine or discipline. Zeal, worked up to enthusiasm, pushed them to these excesses: and we may well believe that they who were punished for them were decorated with the title of martyrs, and made the heroes of pious romances by the zeal of others. The list of martyrs consisted, I believe, of those who suffered for breaking the peace, and for insulting one religion, as much as of those who suffered for professing quietly another, nay more: and thus it might be immeasurably lengthened. Thus too the assertion of ORIGEN may be reconciled easily to the opinion that there was an innumerable army of martyrs in the primitive church. We find passages in the letters of JULIAN, which confirm very much what is here supposed. In that which he writes to the Alexandrians it appears that he did not banish ATHANASIUS because he was a bishop, but on account of his intriguing spirit, and the

[a] Lib. iii. contra Cels.

disturbances

could contribute more, than the eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity in the empire, to the eſtabliſhment of hereditary imperial dignity in his family, and to univerſal peace and tranquillity. He was confirmed in this expectation, no doubt, by the profeſſions and adulations of SYLVESTER, and of the whole tribe of eccleſiaſtics; whether the tale of his converſion by this pope has any more truth in it, than that of his famous grant to the church of Rome, or not. But in order to diſcern the better how theſe profeſſions were kept, and what the effects have been of this eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, we muſt deſcend into ſome few particulars, at leaſt, concerning it, from CONSTANTINE to CHARLES the great, and from CHARLES the great down to our own age. The uſurpations of the religious on the civil ſociety, the abuſe of theology, and the abominable conſequences of

diſturbances he raiſed. JULIAN gives the Chriſtians leave to chuſe any other biſhop, who might inſtruct them as well as ATHANASIUS; and adds, that if they deſired to have him at Alexandria for any other reaſon, that was the reaſon for which he was baniſhed. This emperor, on whoſe teſtimony, tho he was an apoſtate, a reaſonable man, who conſidered the characters of both, would rely much ſooner, than he would rely on that of ſuch a turbulent, intriguing, foul-mouthed prieſt as CYRIL: this emperor, I ſay, complains loudly of the chriſtian flocks for perſecuting one another, and for inſulting the eſtabliſhed church, at the inſtigation of their paſtors. When he promiſes, therefore, to force none to worſhip at his altars, and commands the heathens not to injure nor affront any of them, he commands them likewiſe to live in peace with the heathens and with one another, and threatens to puniſh them, not for their religion, but for ſedition, and the violation of the civil laws.

this

this abuſe, were in part alike, and in part different, and differently carried on with regard to power eſpecially, in theſe two periods, which for that reaſon it is good to diſtinguiſh.

SECTION XXIV.

THESE uſurpations might have been wholly prevented: and altho the abuſe of theology, which was grown up to a great height, could not be ſo, yet might the growth of it have been checked, and the tragical effects of it have been prevented, if CONSTANTINE had reduced, and his ſucceſſors had kept the clergy within proper bounds, inſtead of giving ſuch a looſe to avarice and ambition, to enthuſiaſm and contentious ſubtility, as made them the plagues and ſcourges of the world. The emperors were ſovereign pontiffs. As ſuch, either with this title, or without it, they ſhould have kept the whole power over eccleſiaſtical as well as civil affairs in their own hands, and have applied the former to preſerve order and diſcipline, to prevent abuſe and corruption in the chriſtian, as it had been their prerogative and their duty to apply it in the heathen church. This was natural; this was reaſonable. But nothing could be more unnatural, nor more unreaſonable, than to diveſt themſelves of any part of the imperial power in favor of this order.

IT ſeems too that there could be no need of doing ſo. That the biſhops gave the emperors leave

leave to retain the title of ſovereign pontiffs, is one of thoſe idle tales which BARONIUS invented. But that no objection appears to have been made to it by the Chriſtians, is true; and if there was no objection made for holding a pagan pontificate, there would have been certainly none for aſſuming that office in the chriſtian church. I will not ſay that the emperors might have performed pontifical functions; tho I ſee no abſurdity in the propoſition, nor am able to conceive why they ſhould not have exacted to be ordained prieſts and primates of the whole chriſtian church from the firſt, if that form had been thought neceſſary, as they have ſubmitted to be crowned emperors, ſince that time, by the biſhops. But this I will ſay, and no divine of our church will dare to contradict me, that they might have made themſelves heads of the church, defenders of the faith, and, next under God and his ſon CHRIST JESUS, ſupreme moderators and governors in all matters eccleſiaſtical and civil, without being prieſts. From whence ſhould any oppoſition to CONSTANTINE or his ſucceſſors have ariſen, if he or they had thought fit to execute the functions of chriſtian pontiffs, when the ſtate of religion in the empire permitted them to do ſo; ſince they kept the title, wore the robe, and executed ſome of the powers, at leaſt, of ſupreme pontiffs in the pagan church? Should it have come from the biſhops? But the biſhops were mean and generally ignorant men, exerciſed in the loweſt and leaſt honorable profeſſions, elected by party and

and faction, by intrigue and violence, and ready to comply with any mode that was prevalent, according to the character given of them nearly about this time by St. GREGORY of Nazianzum. We may aſſure ourſelves the good men would have founded high the honor which CONSTANTINE did the church, and his zeal for our holy religion, before they had got the ſtrength they got afterwards, for want of this very precaution. Then, indeed, ſuch an inequality of privileges and advantages was eſtabliſhed between the clergy and the laity in many reſpects, and in this particularly, that the former were deemed capable of exerciſing all the powers, and of enjoying all the dignities and profits of civil magiſtracies, whilſt the latter were excluded from all eccleſiaſtical power, dignity, and profit. In a word, we may believe that this ſtep would have been popular among the whole body of Chriſtians when their religion was firſt eſtabliſhed. Nothing would have appeared more juſt, than that an emperor, by whoſe favor alone they became members of an eſtabliſhed church, from being members of a ſect, ſeldom tolerated, often perſecuted, and always afflicted, ſhould ſuffer no diminution of his imperial prerogative in this great change.

CONSTANTINE neglected to take this advantage in the extent in which he might have aſſerted his right to it. He took, indeed, ſome airs of ſupremacy on certain occaſions; and ſo did his ſucceſſors. They preſided in the ſynods they convened,

vened, they controlled the proceedings of theſe aſſemblies, and they confirmed their decrees in matters of doctrine as well as diſcipline; for without this confirmation theſe decrees would have had little effect. By theſe means the emperors ſecured their prerogative, on which eccleſiaſtical ſynods would not have failed to encroach more than they did, or at leaſt faſter, in caſes of appeals, of exemptions from ſecular juriſdiction, or from the common burden of taxes, and in many other caſes. But the ſucceſſors of CONSTANTINE, laying aſide even the title of ſovereign pontiffs in little more than half a century, if GRATIAN did lay it aſide; and neither CONSTANTINE nor they having preſerved a ſteady exerciſe of the pontifical power over eccleſiaſtical affairs and eccleſiaſtical perſons in the chriſtian church, the exerciſe of it devolved of courſe on the biſhops. A conſtant exerciſe gave the pretence, and ſettled the opinion of a ſole right in them, who could have none independently on the emperors, even in ordinary caſes, to many extraordinary powers, whilſt an occaſional exerciſe of powers, that belonged of right to theſe princes, came to be looked upon in them as uſurpation and ſacrilege. Their chaplains became their maſters: and one of theſe pretends to be ſo even at this time. How CONSTANTINE was the bubble of his own policy, as I have preſumed to ſay that he was, as many great men have been, and as CHARLEMAGNE was in much the ſame reſpect four hundred years after him, may be ſhewn, I think, on good grounds of probability,

bability; without supposing him to have been misled by a bigot respect for the church, which many of those who succeeded him were. It may be shewn, I think, even by ecclesiastical history, for this, like other histories, shews very often more than it owns, even what it denies; and the sagacity of the reader gives him often a right of saying to the historian, "Ex ore tuo condemna-"beris."

THUS it seems to me that the great and fundamental error, from whence so many others proceeded, and which CONSTANTINE committed in the establishment of christianity, was this, which has been touched already: He admitted a clergy into the establishment on the same foot, on which this order had stood whilst christianity was the religion, and these men were the heads, the directors, the governors, and magistrates of a sect by no authority, but that of the sect itself, and therefore illegally such. He admitted them vested with this authority, which might be necessary as long as Christians made a sect apart, distinct from the other subjects of the empire, and not only out of the protection of the laws, but obnoxious to them; and which became unnecessary and dangerous when christianity had a legal establishment, and when the professors of it were entirely incorporated into the empire, enjoyed the protection of the laws in common with other subjects, and more of the smiles and favors of the court. The conduct of CONSTANTINE, on this

great occaſion, muſt needs appear extremely abſurd to every one who conſiders the conſequences it had. But we may eaſily conceive that the ſtate of chriſtianity, of paganiſm, and of the empire in general, as well as a multitude of particular circumſtances to us unknown, might determine him on apparent reaſons of good policy to hold it. If we ſeek for theſe reaſons in the hiſtorians of that age, or in more modern eccleſiaſtical writers, we ſhall be miſled or diſappointed. EUSEBIUS wrote a panegyric, ZOZIMUS a ſatire: and no relations can be more confuſed, no authority more precarious than thoſe of all the authors who have treated theſe ſubjects, and indeed every other eccleſiaſtical ſubject, from that age to this. They have been all intent to ſerve ſome particular turn: and tho all men are regardleſs of truth in ſuch a diſpoſition of mind, yet are there none ſo regardleſs of it as theſe writers, who have rendered church hiſtory more inconſiſtent, and more groſsly fabulous, than any other hiſtory, perhaps than ſome romances. But ſtill, notwithſtanding the little reliance that any of them deſerve, ſome general truths reſult from the concurrent tenor of their writings; two of which I ſhall mention, in order to account for the conduct of CONSTANTINE.

SECTION XXV.

THE firſt of theſe truths is, that this emperor neither deſigned to eſtabliſh chriſtianity, nor did in fact eſtabliſh it with any other view, than

that of making it ſubſervient to his ambition and policy. He worked up this eſtabliſhment of religion, which he preferred to paganiſm for reaſons already given, by ſlow degrees, as he found it anſwer his purpoſes; and he trimmed long between the two. The ſecond of theſe truths is, that in the deſign of attaching the whole body of Chriſtians to himſelf, he choſe to do it by the medium of the clergy. The Chriſtians were diſperſed over the empire, and even beyond the bounds of it. They were of all nations and all languages. But among them all this order of men, which we call the religious ſociety, was eſtabliſhed. This order was often divided; and their diviſions formed different ſects. But however divided they were, nay the more they were divided, the more need they had of imperial favor. The paſtors were brought by one common intereſt under the influence of the court; and the flocks were every where under the influence of their paſtors. Theſe two principles run thro the whole conduct of CONSTANTINE, in every relation of it that is come down to us.

THERE is little room to doubt that he had taken the reſolution of eſtabliſhing chriſtianity when he marched, in the ſeventh year of his reign, from Gaul into Italy againſt MAXENTIUS. It is much more probable too that this reſolution produced the miracle of an illuminated croſs in the air, with an inſcription promiſing him victory, and which he affirmed upon oath that he

had ſeen, as EUSEBIUS relates, than that any ſuch miracle produced his converſion. A ſtory like this was ſufficient to make the impreſſion he deſigned. Nay that which ZOZIMUS relates of a monſtrous flight of owls, that ſettled on the walls of Rome when MAXENTIUS marched out of the city to give CONSTANTINE battle, and which this emperor ſeeing, drew out his troops, might have it's effect likewiſe. His army did not conſiſt of Romans, attached to their antient religion, tho even by ſuch the omen would have been well received, but of Britons, whom we believe to have been already Chriſtians, and of the celtic nations, to whom we may believe that all religions were indifferent enough.

BUT however this might be, whether CONSTANTINE came into Italy with a reſolution of eſtabliſhing chriſtianity, and of leaning on that party in the empire, or whether he took the reſolution when he had beat MAXENTIUS, it is evident that this reſolution was no other than I have repreſented it. LICINIUS was not certainly a convert to chriſtianity, and yet the firſt edict in favor of this religion was publiſhed in his name and by his authority, as well as in the name and by the authority of CONSTANTINE. This edict gave an entire liberty of conſcience. No perſon was to be any longer reſtrained from embracing chriſtianity, but every one was ſet at liberty to profeſs the religion he liked beſt. This was the purport of the edict. EUSEBIUS himſelf carries it no farther,

and

and there was nothing in it which LICINIUS, or any other pagan prince, who thought it his intereſt to relax the ſeverity of former edicts, and to keep meaſures of moderation with the Chriſtians, might not grant without becoming a Chriſtian. Many other favors, more conſiderable and particular to chriſtianity, were granted afterwards. EUSEBIUS ſounds them high*: and they were great, no doubt, tho they did little more than reeſtabliſh Chriſtians in their former rights and poſſeſſions, remit unjuſt and cruel ſentences, reſtore confiſcations, and recal from baniſhment and the mines ſuch as had been condemned to them. In all theſe inſtances, the authority of LICINIUS concurred with that of CONSTANTINE: and if paganiſm was not extirpated, chriſtianity was in a good degree eſtabliſhed, whilſt they governed the empire jointly. When they quarrelled, the ſame political motive, that made LICINIUS change his conduct and perſecute the Chriſtians, made CONSTANTINE perſiſt in ſhewing favor to them. He raiſed them to the higheſt dignities, entruſted them with the moſt important commands, and increaſed the ſtrength of a party in the empire which was zealouſly attached to him.

NOTWITHSTANDING this he trimmed with the other, and it is evident that his zeal for chriſtianity was at leaſt as much political as religious. EUSEBIUS makes him very devout and pious, and compares, in one place, his palace to a church

* EUSEB. paſſim in Hiſt. et in Vita CONSTANT.

in which aſſemblies of the faithful were held. But as the flagrant crimes he committed are inconſiſtent with the devotion and piety aſcribed to him by eccleſiaſtical adulation, ſo the whole tenor of his public acts demonſtrates that ZOZIMUS had ſome reaſon to ſay, he favored the pagan rites in order to pleaſe the ſenate, tho he meant to eſtabliſh chriſtianity. Thus he permitted, even about the time that he held the nicean council, and by a ſolemn reſcript, that the aruſpices ſhould be publicly conſulted; nay he commanded it on the occaſion of ſome reputed prodigies that had happened. Thus, again, he gave countenance, at leaſt, to ſeveral ſuperſtitious ſports that were celebrated in acknowledgment of victories obtained, and to ſeveral ſorts of inchantments that were deemed effectual to procure health and other divine favors. Many inſtances of the ſame kind may be produced, to ſhew what meaſures CONSTANTINE thought himſelf obliged in good policy to keep with paganiſm, even after he had vanquiſhed LICINIUS, and put him to death. But it will be ſufficient that I mention one more, which was the ſtrongeſt of all, and which leads to the ſecond of thoſe general truths, that have been obſerved to reſult from all the hiſtories of this great revolution.

THAT ſeveral offices, which were not only pagan in name, but in their functions too, were poſſeſſed and executed by thoſe who profeſſed chriſtianity, ſeems to me much more clear, than the diſtinc-

diſtinctions and excuſes that are brought in favor of the practice. The practice was authoriſed by the example of CONSTANTINE, who held to the laſt the ſupreme pontificate of the pagan church. I know that ſome writers have ventured to deny the fact, againſt the evidence of hiſtory and antient inſcriptions. I know too that much caſuiſtry has been employed by BARONIUS and others, to ſhew that chriſtian emperors might aſſume the title, and wear the robe, without ſuperſtition or idolatry; for theſe authors are pleaſed to ſuppoſe that they did no more. But they contradict themſelves when they excuſe even this by urging that the authority of ſupreme pontiff was neceſſary to keep the ſenate and the bulk of the people, who were ſtrongly addicted to the old religion, in ſubjection to the imperial authority; for how could the authority of ſupreme pontiff have this or any other effect, unleſs it was exerciſed? And how could it be exerciſed without taking ſome ſhare in the ſuperſtitious diſcipline ſignified by that myſtic robe which GRATIAN is ſaid * to have refuſed to wear for that very reaſon? But if GRATIAN was thus ſcrupulous, and his ſucceſſors after him, of which we may have leave to doubt, CONSTANTINE was not ſo; or he might wear the myſtic robe of pontiff with as little regard to the ſignifications of it, as one of the OTHOS had, very probably, to thoſe of the robe he wore, and whereon the revelations of the apocalypſe were expreſſed in embroidery. The power

* ZOZIMUS.

and influence of this office had been great at all times, and therefore the emperors had kept it, like that of the tribunes, in their own hands. But this power and this influence were never greater than now, and the office of pontiff was grown more conſiderable than that of conſul. It is very probable that CONSTANTINE dared not diveſt himſelf of it: and I believe the beſt reaſon that can be given why he did not make himſelf ſovereign pontiff of the Chriſtians is this, that he found it neceſſary, or at leaſt expedient, to continue high-prieſt of the Pagans. The abſurdity, however, was equally great, whether it was owing to his misfortune or his fault: the abſurdity, I mean, of preſiding over a church he intended to ſubvert, and not preſiding over that which he intended to erect.

THE conſequences began to appear very ſoon, and have continued ever ſince producing, under various forms, in various ways, and with little or no interruption, an uniformity of miſchief. The pre-eminence and dominion over conſcience, which a religious ſociety had acquired among the Chriſtians whilſt they were a ſect in the empire, did not only continue, but were vaſtly extended and increaſed when this religion became the eſtabliſhed religion of the empire. They were extended and increaſed in the exerciſe, and therefore in the effect of them. No powers were taken from this order of men, not even thoſe to which they had the leaſt pretence after this great change. On the contrary,

many

many were added to them, and the weight of that civil authority, on which they uſurped, ſerved to inforce their uſurpations. Their pre-eminence and their dominion over conſcience had been ſo far from promoting charity, and maintaining unity, that they had promoted and maintained a perpetual ſtrife and contention among Chriſtians. If Chriſtians ſuffered much by heathen perſecutions, they ſuffered much by their own inteſtine diviſions. They could not, indeed, make war, and maſſacre one another, nor diſturb, in that manner, the peace of the empire. The authority of the emperors, and the ſtrength of the roman legions kept them in awe, and made ſuch exceſſes impracticable. But their diviſions were ſuch, that the ſect might have been diſſolved, perhaps, whilſt it was a ſect, and the very name of chriſtianity have been loſt, if the ſalutary remedy of a perſecution, common to them all, had not ſometimes intervened to make them remember that they were all of the ſame religion. Theſe diſorders, however, being confined to a ſect, affected the roman ſtate no more, than ours would be affected if any diſputes ſhould ariſe about inward light and ſpiritual gifts among the Quakers, and if thoſe peaceable perſons ſhould fall out, call names, and excommunicate one another. But when the empire became chriſtian, theſe diviſions became fatal to the public tranquillity and welfare.

CONSTANTINE had ſome experience of this in his own reign, towards the end of it eſpecially. But he might ſtill hope, and the ſubmiſſive behaviour of

of the clergy towards him might encourage him to hope that, however divided they were concerning ſpeculative points of religion, he ſhould hold them faſt to his intereſt by their own; and being maſter of the ſhepherds, ſhould be maſter of the flocks, as it has been hinted already. He purſued this principle therefore. He added to the dignity of eccleſiaſtical perſons by the regard he ſhewed them, and by the honors he affected to do them. He added to their power and authority by the wealth, the privileges, and immunities he beſtowed upon them, and by the laws he made in their favor. All this tended, in appearance and in pretence, to the ſupport and improvement of a ſpiritual power alone. He meant that this ſhould be diſtinct from the civil; that they ſhould be independent of one another, and both dependent on him: and he did not ſee that this was a diſtinction without any real difference. He does not ſeem to have enough conſidered two things, which long experience has made manifeſt ſince, and which one would imagine he ſhould have foreſeen. He ſhould have foreſeen that eccleſiaſtical magiſtrates would be always leſs dependent on the emperors, than the civil, and were for that reaſon leſs fit to be truſted with power. It was obvious that civil magiſtrates were the creatures of his will, whom he could make and unmake at pleaſure, and not only deprive of the offices they held, but of all right to any magiſtracy whatever; whereas theſe eccleſiaſtical magiſtrates, whom he admitted by a legal eſtabliſhment into the empire, were elected independently

pendently on him into particular offices, and had a right to this ſort of magiſtracy in general, which he could neither give nor take away. He ſhould have foreſeen that an abſolute power over private conſciences was in nature, and might prove in effect, a much greater power than his own; that the church might turn againſt the ſtate; from the companion become the rival, and from the rival, the tyrant of it. This happened in four centuries after his time. The conſtitution of the chriſtian church, before CONSTANTINE laid the foundations of that ſpiritual tyranny, which he and his ſucceſſors raiſed; and this ſpiritual tyranny, eſtabliſhed and grown into full ſtrength before CHARLES the great, laid the foundations of that temporal tyranny, which he and his father eſtabliſhed in the biſhops of Rome, the remains of which are ſtill exiſtent.

SECTION XXVI.

DURING this period, that reaches from the beginning of the fourth to the end of the eighth century, the religious ſociety pretended directly to ſpiritual power alone, as it has been obſerved. Indirectly, indeed, they aſſumed a ſhare of the other, encroached on the civil magiſtrates, and oppoſed and inſulted them, whereof there were ſeveral inſtances at Rome and Alexandria particularly *. But in the main, they expreſſed great

* No inſtance of this kind can be given greater than the whole conduct of CYRIL, the alexandrian biſhop. This ſaint and

great reſpect and ſubmiſſion to the emperors. CONSTANTINE abetted them in the exerciſe of this

and father of the church was violent and cruel againſt all thoſe who differed from him, even in expreſſion; for NESTORIUS did little more: and yet, when he had prevailed on THEODOSIUS, by bribing moſt probably the eunuch SCHOLASTICUS, to turn at once from favoring NESTORIUS to declare againſt him, this wretch, in concert with pope CELESTINUS, perſecuted the poor man to death with the moſt perſevering and inveterate malice. He ſhewed the ſame violence of temper in uſurping on the civil power, and in ſupporting theſe uſurpations by riots, inſurrections, and aſſaſſinations. He took upon him, without any authority from the civil magiſtrate, to puniſh not only Jews, but ſuch Chriſtians as he called heretics; to drive them out of the city, and to plunder their houſes and churches, the ſpoils of which he abandoned to the mob, who were the inſtruments of his tyranny, for their greater encouragement. ORESTES, the governor of Alexandria, complained of theſe invaſions and outrages, and attempted to reſtrain them, as it was his duty to do. But CYRIL, by exciting the common people, the moſt ſeditious that were to be found in any city of the empire, maintained, as it were, a civil war in that city, and called in another ſort of mob to join with this in ſupporting it. He called in five hundred monks at once from their retreats in the mountains of Nitria. To one of theſe, named AMMONIUS, a fit inſtrument for his purpoſe, he gave the command of this ſecular and eccleſiaſtical mob, by whom ORESTES was attacked in the ſtreets of Alexandria. He was reſcued, indeed, and his life was ſaved, tho he had been wounded by AMMONIUS in the fray. The mob was diſperſed, AMMONIUS ſeiſed and put to death, and CYRIL had the impudence to declare him a martyr, and to cauſe him to be honored as ſuch.

IT may not be amiſs to mention another example of the revengeful and ſanguinary character of this prelate. HYPATIA was a platonician lady, of ſo much wiſdom, knowledge, and virtue, that ſhe uſed to be conſulted by the philoſophers, and even the governors of Alexandria, and that ORESTES was particularly

this power: and his ſucceſſors, ſometimes through bigotry, and ſometimes through policy, as we may collect from the different characters of theſe princes, made themſelves parties, on one ſide or the other, in every eccleſiaſtical diſpute that aroſe. This gave them much to do, maintained a perpetual ferment in the empire, and was almoſt as great an evil from within, as the inundation of barbarous nations was from without.

LET us not preſume, like many divines, to account, by the ſhort and fallible rule of human reaſon, for what providence directs or ſuffers. But we may obſerve with aſtoniſhment, that a religion, revealed by God himſelf, taught by himſelf in one country, where he ſealed it with his blood, as ſtrangely as that may ſound to a mere theiſt, and propagated through a great part of the world by perſons commiſſioned by him, as well as aſſiſted ſupernaturally by the Holy Ghoſt, ſhould continue more than ſeventeen hundred years in a flux ſtate.

particularly attached to her. To be revenged, therefore, of ORESTES, for HYPATIA does not appear to have given him any provocation, this woman was attacked by another eccleſiaſtical bravo, whoſe name was PETER, at the inſtigation of CYRIL, in the ſtreets of Alexandria, where they ſtripped her naked, dragged her along, and made her ſuffer the moſt cruel outrages, till ſhe expired.

IT is not worth my while to quote any more inſtances of the uſurpations and cruelty which the religious ſociety exerciſed, whenever, and wherever, they durſt. Hiſtory is full of them. They were exerciſed at Rome ſometimes, as well as at Alexandria, and wherever chriſtianity prevailed.

I affirm

I affirm the more boldly that it has continued in this ſtate ſo long, becauſe, tho it will be ſaid, and is ſaid every day in the pulpit, that all the important points of chriſtianity, and every thing made neceſſary to ſalvation, are fixed and clear, yet the aſſertion is evidently falſe when it is applied to theological, however true it would be, if it was applied to goſpel chriſtianity; and it may be proved to be ſo even out of the inconſiſtent mouths of thoſe who make it. To whatever ſect we addict ourſelves, if we are ſaved, it muſt be on the faith of man, it cannot be on that of God; for the pure word of God neither is nor ever has been the ſole criterion of orthodoxy. Theology has done by the word, as philoſophy did by the works of God, and the ſame abuſe has been made of both. Naturaliſts have built immenſe ſyſtems of imagination on a few ſenſible phaenomena, inaccurately obſerved very often, and not always very fairly recorded. Divines have done the ſame, on a few intelligible and unintelligible paſſages, picked up here and there in the ſcriptures, and connected and commented as their purpoſes required. The firſt have not ſtopped where the phaenomena have ceaſed; nor the other, where the ſcriptures have been ſilent, or have not ſpoken clearly; which ought to be reputed the ſame, and to check our preſumption alike. On the contrary, where they have had no rule to go by, like men freed from reſtraint, they have gone the greateſt and the boldeſt lengths. This has been the caſe from the apoſtolical days to theſe, and to this we owe all the diſputes

diſputes that have puzzled religion, and all the miſchief which theſe diſputes have brought on the world. This muſt be the caſe too, till divines return to the goſpel, as philoſophers have returned to nature, and preſume to dogmatiſe no farther than the plain import of it will juſtify, contenting themſelves to leave things dark and ambiguous, which revelation has left ſo. How ſoon this will happen, I know not. Such a method is now, as it was of old, too ſober for enthuſiaſts, the ſubject too barren for rhetors, and the avowal of ignorance too humble for doctors, who pretend to teach ſupernatural, as well as natural theology, and to aſſume to themſelves, that knowledge, which CHRIST intended ſhould be common to all who are to be ſaved by it, as ERASMUS ſomewhere or other obſerves *. But we muſt go back again to the primitive ages, that we may ſee, in ſome few particular inſtances, the riſe and growth of human authority in matters of religion.

IT was foretold that falſe prophets would ariſe among Chriſtians, and it was natural that they ſhould in ſuch an age, in countries where the minds of men had been long prepared for every thing that appeared ſupernatural or myſtic, and on the publication of a religion new and marvellous. Converted Jews might think, and in fact did think, that they had a right to take their ſhare in building up and adorning a religion, which

* —— ad paucos homines contrahimus rem, qua CHRISTUS voluit nihil eſſe communis.

ſprung

ſprung out of theirs, and whoſe authority reſted on that of their prophecies. Converted heathens might think, and in fact did think, that they had at leaſt as good a right of the ſame kind, ſince ſome of the moſt ſublime doctrines of chriſtianity were ſuch as PYTHAGORAS and PLATO had taught; and ſince the prophecies, urged from heathen records concerning CHRIST, were much more clear and expreſs than any of thoſe that were brought from the jewiſh ſcriptures. But there were other circumſtances, which gave more immediate temptation and pretence to the falſe prophets that aroſe in the days of the apoſtles, and multiplied very faſt afterwards, like ſwarms of inſects from thoſe dung-hills, the cabaliſtical ſchools of Jews, and the metaphyſical ſchools of heathens.

THE chriſtian ſyſtem of faith and practice was taught by God himſelf; and to aſſert or to imply that the divine Logos, who was incarnated to inſtruct as well as to redeem mankind, revealed it incompletely or imperfectly, is not leſs abſurd nor leſs impious, than to aſſert, or to imply, that he performed the work of our redemption incompletely or imperfectly. Chriſtianity therefore, as the ſaviour publiſhed it, was full and ſufficient to all the purpoſes of it. Simplicity and plainneſs ſhewed that it was deſigned to be the religion of mankind, and manifeſted likewiſe the divinity of it's original. But then, this very ſimplicity and plainneſs was a ſtumbling block to ſome, and a pretence to others. The theology of thoſe ages had

had accuſtomed men to think that nothing could be divine, which was not myſterious, and that incoherent, obſcure rhapſodies, which are frequently the language of ignorance or fraud, were ſure characteriſtics of ſuperior knowledge in the firſt philoſophy, or of inſpiration from above. The prophets, among the Jews, had ſpoke in this ſtyle; the heathen oracles pronounced enigmas; the theology of Egypt and the eaſt was unintelligible; and the metaphyſical refinements of the greek philoſophers were a mere jargon of words, ſuppoſed to ſignify moſt ſublime truths, tho they had really no meaning at all. The Jews, therefore, who believed in the Meſſiah when he appeared, and the heathens, who heard that the divine Logos had appeared, could not fail to receive his doctrine agreeably to their prejudices and habitudes. A ſyſtem of natural law, enforced by a divine miſſion and a divine ſanction, had nothing in it which was new to either of them; and the heathens knew that the title of Son of God had been given to ZOROASTER and to others. But the ſimplicity and plainneſs of his doctrine might ſurpriſe them the more, for this very reaſon. They could ſcarce fail to perſuade themſelves that this ſimplicity and plainneſs muſt be the veil of ſomething more marvellous and more worthy of a revelation. All was type and figure in the ſacred writings of the Jews, and they were obliged to underſtand now of a ſpiritual, what they had till now underſtood of a temporal kingdom. All the groſs conceptions of polytheiſm and idolatry were exploded. Heaven

continued to be peopled as much as ever, but with inhabitants of another kind. In ſhort, all the pompous rites and ceremonies of external worſhip were aboliſhed at firſt among Chriſtians, and God was to be adored in ſpirit and in truth. After ſuch changes as theſe, it ſeems to me that the converts to chriſtianity could not, as they did not, fail, agreeably to their prejudices and habitudes, to embroider ſome of the tinſel of the religions they left on the religion they embraced, nor to make the ſpirituality of one as fit to create aſtoniſhment, and to maintain an attachment in the minds of men, as the carnality of the others.

THIS was done, and great means of doing it offered themſelves. Chriſtianity was taught firſt, and propagated afterwards, by word of mouth. So the apoſtles and the diſciples received it, and ſo they inſtructed the converts they made in their ſeveral diſperſions. Nor were theſe the ſole preachers of divine revelation. Others aroſe who had not been taught in the ſame ſchool, nor been commiſſioned to teach in the ſame manner. PAUL himſelf was one of theſe. He entered a volunteer into the apoſtleſhip. At leaſt his extraordinary vocation was known to none but himſelf. He went about preaching his goſpel, as he called it, before he had any correſpondence, or even acquaintance, with thoſe who compoſed the church of CHRIST at that time; and when he came among them he took the air of a maſter, ſubmitted to none, but controlled and reprimanded even the

prince

prince of the apoſtles, as you pretended catholics affect to call St. PETER. The apoſtles, the diſciples, and the firſt converts in general, were ignorant, illiterate perſons. Such men, therefore, as deemed themſelves more ſkilful in cabaliſtical interpretations of the ſcriptures, and more knowing in jewiſh and heathen theology, might aſſume the ſame rights which the apoſtles and diſciples exerciſed; teach, convert, and form different congregations: or they might add to, and alter the doctrines, which the apoſtles and diſciples taught, and thus form different ſects in the ſame churches, by aſſuming no other right than that which every member had, man and woman indiſcriminately, the right of propheſying or preaching as often, as they pleaſed to ſuppoſe that the Spirit moved them to it. The apoſtles oppoſed the falſe prophets, that aroſe in their time, by epiſtles, by meſſages, and by reviſiting the churches they had themſelves founded, but often without effect, and always with much difficulty, as we may judge by that which PAUL found to maintain his authority in the church of Corinth, and in others.

ONE would think that the gifts of the Spirit, among which this of propheſying or preaching held a firſt place, ſhould not only have ſupplied the want of all other knowledge, and have put to ſilence the moſt learned and eloquent, but ſhould have eſtabliſhed, by the influence and energy of one and the ſame Spirit, one and the ſame ſyſtem of faith and manners in the whole chriſtian church.

This would have been the caſe too, it muſt have been ſo neceſſarily, if all thoſe who pretended to gifts of the Spirit had really had them; and it has always ſeemed to me that ORIGEN anſwered CELSUS very poorly, when, to juſtify or excuſe the variety of opinions and ſects among Chriſtians, he urges thoſe that abounded among the heathen philoſophers. But many thought they had theſe gifts of the Spirit who had them not, many pretended to have them who knew they had them not; and it grew ſo eaſy to impoſe the belief of them on the multitude, that SIMON, who had offered to buy them, might think himſelf well off that bargain perhaps, and that the other heretics who aroſe might not find any want of them to eſtabliſh their ſects. The belief that they had them was eaſily wrought by ſham miracles, by ſeeming or real auſterity of life, by diſcourſes filled with falſe ſublime about ſpiritual beings and metaphyſical or ſupernatural doctrines, and by other proofs of the ſame equivocal ſort, in an age when enthuſiaſm was the epidemical diſeaſe, and when one great revelation gave occaſion and pretence to ſo many little ones. That ſuch was the temper of the age, and ſuch the character of thoſe who profeſſed chriſtianity in it, will appear the leſs doubtful to us, if we call to mind the ſeveral apocalypſes that were current among the primitive Chriſtians, the apocalypſe or revelation of St. JOHN and that of CERINTHUS, for inſtance, if they were not the ſame, and if the reveries of a mad judaiſing Chriſtian have not got into the canon under the apoſtle's name: the apocalypſe

calypſe of St. PETER, that of St. PAUL, and that of St. THOMAS likewiſe, all of which are now loſt, and have been ſo long; but the ſtyle and matter of which may be gueſſed at with ſufficient aſſurance by the ſtyle and matter of that which we have in our hands. That the apoſtles, to whom theſe are aſcribed, were not the authors of them may well be. But the authors of them were Chriſtians; and if all the fathers and churches did not receive them, as all did not receive the apocalypſe admitted into our canon, yet many did, and that is ſufficient for my purpoſe, eſpecially when it is joined to ſo many other inſtances of enthuſiaſm as the firſt Chriſtians gave, which cannot be denied, tho the terms may be changed, and madneſs and phrenſy may be called divine illumination, myſtical rapture, or holy zeal.

THE names alone of thoſe who held different opinions concerning the moſt important points of chriſtianity, and formed different ſects, would fill a very long roll; and even a ſummary account of their doctrines would fill a treatiſe much larger than I deſign this eſſay ſhall be. Beſides which, I am far from believing the greateſt part of the abſurdities, profanations, and impieties imputed to them by IRENAEUS, EPIPHANIUS, CLEMENT of Alexandria, EUSEBIUS, and others, ſome as antient, and ſome more modern. What credit and what reſpect ſoever fathers and eccleſiaſtical writers may deſerve on other ſubjects, ſure I am that they deſerve none when they ſpeak of thoſe who dif-

fered from them, and on whom, for that sufficient reason, the brand of heresy had been once fixed. The parties of such men were their judges: and we know them only by the passionate accusations which their enemies brought, and the severe sentences which they pronounced. Even the writings against opinions that prevailed after long contests, and contests sometimes of dubious issue in the church, as well as the writings against christianity itself, were stifled in their birth, or destroyed afterwards, by the vigilance of the orthodox, and the zeal of emperors who exerted their whole authority for this purpose; instances of which are to be found, in the theodosian code particularly. Nothing can be therefore more uncharitable, nor more unjust, for charity and justice are due to the dead, as well as to the living, than to join in the common cry against the heretics, that arose in the first and succeeding ages of the church; to do this implicitly on the most suspicious testimony, and to do it in the full extent of abominations and absurdities imputed to them by ecclesiastical writers. I shall decline this proceeding, tho the custom be so established, and so sanctified in opinion, that he who declines it runs the risk of becoming an object of the same uncharitableness and injustice.

MANY accusations have been brought by Christians against Christians, that carry on their front as evident marks of calumny, as any of those which the heathen brought against the whole body of Christians, in the rage of party and the fury of persecution. The former seem even to have been invented

invented on the latter, and they were applied to the ſame cruel uſe wherever the orthodox had power for it. The Carpocratians, or the Montaniſts, or both, for both were comprehended in the general appellation of Gnoſtics, lay under the imputation of drawing blood from infants, and making up the ſacramental bread with it. Can we doubt that this idle tale took it's riſe from another, which the heathens propagated againſt the Chriſtians, whom they accuſed of ſacrificing children and eating their fleſh? That the celebration of nocturnal myſteries among the Chriſtians might give occaſion to ſome debauch, as it had done among the Pagans, we may believe. But that the promiſcuous, nay inceſtuous uſe of women was a religious inſtitution of any ſect, or that the Nicholaites preſcribed this uſe of them on every friday, as one of the neceſſary means of ſalvation, I believe no more than I do the ſilly ſtory, as circumſtantial as it is, which TERTULLIAN refutes, of a dog tied to a candleſtick in the love-feaſts of Chriſtians, which he pulled down and extinguiſhed by catching at a piece of bread thrown out of his reach; after which, not only other devout perſons mingled together in the dark promiſcuouſly, but even fathers and daughters, mothers and ſons, brothers and ſiſters, in one common inceſt.

THESE objections, and ſuch as theſe, ſhould not have been made by the orthodox, out of a regard to truth; nor ſhould others have been inſiſted on as much as they were, perhaps in point of prudence.

dence. The Simonians were reputed magicians, like the founder of their ſect. So were the Carpocratians, the Valentinians, and others. They pretended to charms and enchantments, to command the good, to conſtrain the evil ſpirits, and to exerciſe all the imaginary powers of this kind, which were believed in a ſuperſtitious age, under the notion of magic natural and theurgic. The impoſition was groſs, no doubt, and the practice a cheat. But if we had in our hands the apologies of theſe heretics, as we have thoſe of the orthodox, I ſuſpect that we ſhould find the former ready to juſtify, or to excuſe, themſelves by the example of the latter. They might quote, unjuſtly indeed, but plauſibly at that time, the precept of St. JAMES *, and the practice of the church, as an example of both kinds of magic in one. The apoſtle directs, that prayers ſhould be ſaid over the ſick, and that they ſhould be anointed with oil in the name of the Lord; the effect of which ceremony was to be the cure of their infirmities, and the remiſſion of their ſins. Your pretended catholic church employs it ſo late, that, tho you believe piouſly that it ſerves for the remiſſion of ſins, you cannot diſcover, by experiment, whether it ſerves as effectually to the cure of diſeaſes. But in the primitive church, the remedy was employed for both, and the ſick took it betimes. It was a ſecret, might the apologiſts of hereſy ſay, both of natural and theurgic magic: and they might pretend that ſeveral ſuch had been diſcovered by

* Chap. v.

them,

them, or by their illuminated maſters. They might proceed farther, and quote all the pompous things that chriſtian apologiſts uſed to advance concerning the power they pretended to exerciſe daily over demons, whom they conjured, ſubdued, and expelled out of the bodies of men, when all the exorciſms of the heathens had failed. The apologiſts of theſe hereſies, who writ later, might urge ſtill greater authorities to juſtify their pretenſions. They might appeal, for inſtance, to the conſtant and univerſal practice of their adverſaries themſelves, even in that age, who admitted neither children nor perſons grown up to baptiſm, till the impure ſpirits were driven from them by exorciſms, and by the holy blowings of prieſts upon them: which ſuperſtitious ceremony was brought gravely as a proof in the diſpute with the Semi-pelagians about grace, and was ſuppoſed neceſſary to precede baptiſm, as baptiſm grace.

THE truth is, that ſeveral of the ſuperſtitious notions, inſtitutions, and cuſtoms of the eaſtern and egyptian nations crept into chriſtianity, round about through judaiſm at firſt, and afterwards directly. Every one took of this tinſel, as I called it above, what he liked beſt, or what he thought might be beſt adjuſted to improve the chriſtian ſyſtem. This was done by jewiſh converts, in the ſpirit of the cabala, which taught them, under the pretence of explaining, to create myſteries where there were none; and by heathen converts, in the delirious ſpirit of metaphyſics,

ſics, which they had caught from the pythagorean and platonic philoſophy. It was common to all Chriſtians. It was not confined to thoſe, who were called heretics becauſe they differed from thoſe who aſſumed the title of orthodox. If the former aſſumed the pompous title of Gnoſtics, and deſpiſed the firſt preachers of chriſtianity as ignorant and illiterate men, the latter grew Gnoſtics ſoon, without aſſuming the title, tho CLEMENT of Alexandria maintained that to be a good Chriſtian it was neceſſary to be a good Gnoſtic. Thus ignorance and learning conſpired to turn the plaineſt religion that ever was into a chaos of theology, from which it has never been reduced again to an uniform, conſiſtent, and intelligible ſyſtem. It ſeems too that the teachers of it have never deſigned that it ſhould be ſo reduced; for they have proceeded, in every age, as if religion was intended, ſays the author of Hudibras very ſenſibly, in his burleſque ſtyle, for nothing elſe but to be mended. God drew light out of darkneſs: men have drawn darkneſs out of light; and whilſt many have pretended to be their guides, they have wandered different ways without any guide at all: for it is in this caſe moſt true, that the blind have led the blind, and they have all fallen, ſome into one ditch, ſome into another. All have pretended ſubmiſſion to the authority of God. All without exception, orthodox as well as heretics, have ſubmitted, in truth, to the authority of man. Numberleſs human inſtitutions have divided a world that the divine might

have

have united; and, inſtead of univerſal peace, founded on univerſal benevolence, the natural effect of the latter, they have cauſed and maintained perpetual diſcord, hatred, wars, perſecutions, and maſſacres. I ſaid that chriſtianity became a chaos of theology, and the image is proper. It has been compoſed of jarring elements ever ſince,

nulli ſua forma manebat,
Obſtabatque aliis aliud.

THESE diviſions and contentions were ſo general in the primitive church, that St. JEROM ſuppoſes them to have given occaſion to the inſtitution of biſhops: and I will obſerve by the way, that I may make my court to your clergy and ours, that even on this hypotheſis biſhops may be reckoned of apoſtolical inſtitution; ſince the reaſon of inſtituting them commenced in the days of the apoſtles. This reaſon was, according to St. JEROM *, becauſe there would be otherwiſe as many ſchiſms as prieſts, and becauſe every one of theſe, drawing men to his private opinions, which was, I believe, the original meaning of the word hereſy, the church of CHRIST would be otherwiſe broken †. Thoſe aſſemblies, which we call councils, had been convened for the ſame purpoſe, in imitation of that which was held at Jeruſalem, and wherein the ſchiſm breaking out at Antioch, and fomented or authoriſed, at leaſt, by the op-

* Adv. LUCIF. † Ad EVAG.

poſition

poſition of PETER and PAUL, was compromiſed. But neither of theſe means proved effectual. Biſhops quarrelled, diſputed, intrigued, when they ſtood ſingle: and when they aſſembled in councils, they anathematiſed, that is, they curſed and damned one another. Various goſpels, various epiſtles, were current. They were all received, in ſome of the churches at leaſt. What they contained, that are not come down to us, we know not. But we may well believe that they gave occaſion to diverſity of opinions, ſince we know that the boaſted chain of tradition was not uniform in ſome of the moſt important points, and ſince we know that the diſputes which aroſe in chriſtian congregations, of how great or how little moment ſoever, were puſhed with the utmoſt violence. The diſpute juſt mentioned could not regard eſſentials; for about eſſentials the prince of the apoſtles could not err, nor would have yielded to a new comer who had never converſed with the Lord, and who could pretend to no more of the gifts and illuminations of the Spirit than himſelf. Such again was the diſpute about the celebration of eaſter, in which, trifling as it was, much acrimony was ſhewn, many ſynods were held, and a * biſhop of Rome was on the point of excommunicating all the churches of Aſia. I cite no more of this ſort, which regarded chiefly diſcipline and outward obſervances, wherein there were ſome who affected greater evangelical purity, ſome who aſſerted evangelical liberty, and ſome who practiſed a ſort of

* VICTOR,

ſpiritual

ſpiritual licentiouſneſs. But I proceed to obſerve that other diſputes aroſe, wherein the moſt eſſential points of chriſtianity were ſuppoſed to conſiſt. Theſe were diſputes about faith more than works; and tho ſuch of the diſputants, as grew by time, accident, management, or violence, to be reputed orthodox, damned thoſe who differed from them; yet the points on which they differed were ſo undeterminable by revelation, and ſo incomprehenſible to reaſon, that they remain, after all the miſchief they have done, ſtill undetermined for want of any criterion. Of the diſputes about grace, predeſtination, free-will, election, reprobation, ſanctification, juſtification, and other ſublime theological doctrines which St. PAUL pretended to teach and to explain, and which it were to be wiſhed that no man had preſumed to teach after that great apoſtle, ſince they appeared obſcure even to St. PETER, I ſhall ſay nothing. It will be ſufficient that I ſay ſomething of the opinions that were entertained, and of the diſputes that aroſe, in the primitive church, concerning the divine and ſpiritual natures.

Now concerning theſe particularly we muſt obſerve that they were derived much more from the heathen, than the jewiſh theology. As much uſe as the latter made of angels in their ſcriptures, and as fond as ſome writers have been to make MICHAEL paſs for a ſecond eſſence in the trinity, and GABRIEL for a third, it has been the opinion of learned men that the Jews did not know, before

fore the captivity, so much as the names they gave to these heavenly messengers, after it. But to begin higher, and at the first principle of all theology. It has been shewn, in one of these essays, on grounds of very great probability, that the one Supreme Being was known to the heathens, that he was acknowledged even by those among whom polytheism and idolatry prevailed, and that he was worshipped too wherever a crowd of imaginary divinities, that superstition introduced, did not intercept this worship. It must be confessed that this happened sooner or later in all those countries to which our traditions extend. They had ungenerated and generated, supercelestial and celestial gods, whole gods and half gods, and angels and demons, and genii and spirits, and souls, in all their systems of theology. This monstrous assemblage made the object of vulgar adoration. But we know that philosophers thought more reasonably at all times, or that their inward doctrine was less absurd than their outward, and that theism was taught more purely, and that religion was made more intellectual by those of them who refined on this gross theology, like PYTHAGORAS and PLATO, whose philosophy had spread during some centuries before christianity began, and was taught in the famous school of Alexandria, both when it began and long after. From this school there came some of the greatest advocates, and some of the greatest enemies of christianity, some of the greatest saints, and some of the greatest heretics. It could

could not happen otherwiſe, for many reaſons, and among the reſt for this. The ſect of PLOTINUS was eſtabliſhed at this time, and the mode of chuſing particular opinions in every ſect, without an entire attachment to any one, was prevalent, as it has been ſaid, I think, already. This mode had a great influence on the chriſtian ſyſtem. Many inſtances of it might be produced. That of ORIGEN may ſtand for all. He was zealous, but learned. He applied himſelf to the ſtudy of the ſcriptures, and took infinite pains to eſtabliſh the text, and fix the ſenſe of them: but he was imbued ſo ſtrongly with caballiſtical and metaphyſical notions and habits, that he taught many whimſical doctrines, and gave much advantage to men every way his inferiors, to ſuch as JEROM among the antients, and ſuch as BEZA among the moderns.

CHRISTIANS who formed their opinions concerning the Supreme Being in this ſchool, or out of it, on the beſt principles of heathen theology, formed them very different from thoſe of the Jews. They went into extremes on both ſides. The Jews believed not only the monarchy of God over all being, but his unity; and were famous for their averſion to polytheiſm and idolatry, at leaſt after their ſeventy years captivity. If they had not received this faith from their patriarchs, they might have learned it from the Egyptians. Nay their patriarchs might learn it by their commerce with this people. I do not ſay that

that they did. But this I ſay, that it is more eaſy to ſhew how they might, than divines have found it, to give a ſufficient reaſon why MOSES, who took ſo many inſtitutions from Egypt, of much leſs importance and efficacy towards the good government of a rebellious and obſtinate people, neglected to inculcate the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul, and of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments; which other legiſlators, who were not more learned than he was in all the learning of the Egyptians, took from them, and employed to the beſt purpoſes. But altho the conceptions, which the Jews entertained of the Supreme Being, were thus far very orthodox in the eye of reaſon, and altho their pſalmiſts and their prophets ſtrained their imaginations to expreſs the moſt elevated ſentiments of God, of his works, and of the methods of his providence; yet this eternal, this infinite being was repreſented in their hiſtories, and in the whole ſyſtem of their religion, as a local tutelary deity, carried about in a trunk, or reſiding in a temple; as an ally, who had entered into a covenant with their fathers; as a legiſlator, who had writ their laws with his own hand; as a king, who had actually held the reins of their government; and as an induſtrious magiſtrate, who deſcended into all the particulars of religious and civil adminiſtration, even into the moſt minute and meaneſt. Thus were the Jews accuſtomed to familiariſe themſelves with the Supreme Being, and to imagine that he familiariſed himſelf with them; to think him conſtantly employed

ployed about them, as about the nation he had choſen for his elect and favorite people, and to figure him to themſelves receiving their ſacrifices, and liſtening to their prayers, ſometimes at leaſt as groſsly, as LUCIAN repreſents JUPITER. This will appear in the eye of reaſon to be one extreme.

THE other carries a greater appearance of reverence to the Supreme Being, but is little leſs abſurd: and whilſt the direct tendency of the former notions was to promote ſuperſtition, and to make God the object of it, the indirect tendency of thoſe I am going to mention was to promote polytheiſm and idolatry. It would not be to the purpoſe to collect many things, which pagan monotheiſts have ſaid of the Supreme Being. PLATO himſelf would have done well, notwithſtanding the ſublime expreſſions concerning the divine nature, which are to be found in his writings, to keep the reſerve on this ſubject which he profeſſes in one of his letters: and, upon the whole, the heathen and the chriſtian divines both would have done much better than they did, if they had followed more cloſely and more conſtantly the example of SIMONIDES, who owned himſelf unable, after ſeveral delays, to anſwer the queſtion HIERO put to him, "Quid aut qualis "eſſet Deus." The divine nature cannot be explained by human words; for it cannot be conceived by human ideas: and therefore none but delirious metaphyſicians, who employ words, that

impoſe by their ſound and have no determinate ideas affixed to them, will ever attempt this explanation. All that the wit of man can do is to ſpeak cautiouſly and reverently of it, according to thoſe general notices of wiſdom, and power, and majeſty, and all other perfections, which we are able to collect à poſteriori, that is, from the works of God, and which ſerve ſtill more to ſhew our ignorance than our knowledge.

SENSIBLE of this, the heathen divines in their ſober moods repreſented the Supreme Being as hidden from us in the depths of darkneſs, or in exceſs of light; a firſt ſelf-exiſtent cauſe of all exiſtence; a real being, but above all eſſence, really intelligent, but above all intelligence: and, leſt ſuch notions as theſe ſhould carry men not only to think very truly of the incomprehenſibility of God, but to imagine, according to the groſſneſs of their conceptions, that the Creator was too far removed from his creature, the workman from his work, and the governor from the governed, the heathens invented a chain of beings from God to man, and a more extenſive ſyſtem of divine natures. The Jews had brought the firſt and only God, that they acknowledged, too near to man, and had made him an actor immediately and perſonally, as it were, in the creation and in the government of the world. This was too abſurd for heathen divines. It could never enter into the conception of ſuch as PLATO, for inſtance, who declared, or made the firſt God declare in the Timæus,

means; that the whole animal world muſt have been neceſſarily immortal if it had been an immediate effect of the firſt cauſe. The ſame men would have deemed it a profanation, as well as an abſurdity; and to avoid both one and the other, they aſſumed all thoſe inferior gods, and miniſtring ſpirits, which became the objects of ſo much idolatry.

THE pythagorean and platonic ſchools imagined two ſorts of emanations from the Supreme Being, as it has been hinted. Some of theſe were ſuppoſed to go out of the deity, and to be participating beings. So they were called: and this claſs was numberleſs; ſince it contained all the inferior and younger gods, and all the ſpiritual beings, from the ſoul of the world, which PROCLUS, or one of the ſame mad tribe, calls the elder ſiſter, down to the ſoul of man, which he calls the younger ſiſter. Other emanations, two only, were aſſumed to remain in the deity, and to be emanations that do not emane, goings out that do not go out, the Logos or firſt mind, the Pſyche or the firſt ſoul; one of whom was the Nous of ANAXAGORAS, the Demiurgus or the maker of the world, and the other a living ſelf-moving principle, that gives life and motion to all that lives and moves. This was a trinity in the godhead, or this was the godhead, the "To "theion," ſuch as ſeveral of the latter Platoniſts, who turned dogmatiſts, and laid aſide the name of academicians, conceived it to be. True it it is,

that ſcarce any two of the heathen trinitarians held the ſame language, no nor any one of them in two different places. It was the language of men who rambled from one arbitrary hypotheſis to another; and what I am to obſerve particularly here is, that altho they ſpoke ſometimes of the monade, or firſt unity alone, as God, yet they aſcribed often ſo much to the ſecond God, that the firſt became in ſome ſort a non-entity, an abſtract or notional being, a being and no being; without eſſence or nature, becauſe above them; and rather an intelligible, than an intelligent principle. Thus they left, in ſome ſort, no place to the one true God in their conceptions, whilſt they endeavoured to raiſe him above all conception; and whilſt ſome, like the Jews, employed him too much and in too trifling a manner in the formation and government of the world, they baniſhed him almoſt entirely out of the ſyſtem of his works.

I HAVE mentioned theſe notions the rather, becauſe their indirect tendency in their oppoſition to judaiſm is to promote polytheiſm and idolatry, as I ſaid above; and becauſe, notwithſtanding this tendency, they come the neareſt to thoſe that prevailed moſt in the chriſtian church, to thoſe particularly that remained unfixed during three centuries, and that required the greateſt efforts of human authority to reduce them, when they were fixed, into one uniform profeſſion. On all theſe accounts

accounts it is proper to ſpeak a little more largely of them.

SECTION XXVII.

I HAVE ſpoken ſomewhere of the ditheiſtical doctrine. It was very antient, no doubt, tho not ſo univerſally profeſſed as PLUTARCH repreſents it to have been. OROMASDES and ARIMANIUS were the good and the bad principle among the Perſians; OSIRIS and TYPHON among the Egyptians. PYTHAGORAS has been ſuſpected, not convicted, of holding this doctrine; for by his Duad, or evil principle, he might mean nothing more, than matter: and PLATO did only ſeem to lay ſome foundation for it by his hypotheſis concerning the original of evil. CERDON, or MARCION, or ſome of the Gnoſtics, introduced it into chriſtianity: and the ſect who held it continued under the names of Manicheans and Paulicians from the third till the end of the ninth century. As repugnant as this doctrine is to our moſt clear and beſt determined ideas, it ſeemed to account for the exiſtence of evil, as well as good, and for the ſuppoſed irregular, unjuſt diſtribution of them, conſiſtently with the belief of a Supreme Being infinitely good. This was enough for ſuch arabian and perſian philoſophers, as SCYTHIANUS, TEREBINTHUS, or MANES, and indeed for moſt other philoſophers, in ages when a little ſuperficial plauſibility was ſufficient to convert any hypotheſis, againſt the evidence of reaſon, into a

dogma. I have recalled it in this place, because it leads me to make two observations, that will cast some light, the second especially, on the obscure and confused theology of which we are going to make mention. The tritheistical doctrine appears then to be as antient as the ditheistical, that is, more antient than our most antient traditions, not only by many direct proofs, but even by this, that the primitive ditheists seemed to borrow from the other system when, to improve their own, some of them altered it so far as to place a mediating principle between the good and the evil god. A strange kind of tritheism surely, or rather a system which partook of both, and was neither. We may observe, in the next place, that the second god of the ditheists kept his rank but ill, and was degraded, from a co-equality and co-eternity with the first, to be an inferior, a created, a fallen being. He was, indeed, even in this state a very powerful being; since he could transport the Son of God from the desert to the top of the temple, and afterwards to that of an high mountain. That Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, and that he was hungry, ought not to lessen our admiration of this diabolical strength; since we are not to consider it as bodily, but as spiritual strength, and this the Son of God could exert, as it appeared by his miracles, tho he was in the body. The devil, notwithstanding this circumstance, of which he could not be ignorant, confided so much in his own strength, and was so impudent, that he tempted him,

him, that he tauntingly quoted paſſages of the ſcripture to him, as JESUS quoted ſome to the devil, and, in ſhort, that he inſulted him ſo far as to bid him fall down and worſhip him *. Theſe facts muſt needs give us a very high opinion of the rank which the principal devil held among ſpiritual natures, and may induce us to think that the devils, over whom the Chriſtians exerciſed ſo much power afterwards, were devils of inferior ſort: ſuch as SCYTHIANUS, TEREBINTHUS, and other magicians uſed to invoke from the tops of houſes; in which exerciſe the two I have named fell down and broke their necks, according to EPIPHANIUS, or one of them at leaſt. But ſtill the devil, the firſt and greateſt of the diabolical ſociety, was a degraded being. He began to be ſo among the Pagans. Such the Chriſtians allowed him to be: and he would have paſſed no longer for a firſt principle, nor a god ſelf-exiſtent and independent any where, if the heretics here ſpoken of had not revived and propagated this abominable opinion.

THE very contrary happened in the tritheiſtical ſyſtem, after the eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity: and the ſecond and the third divine hypoſtaſes grew by degrees not only into a ſimilitude of nature, a co-equality and co-eternity, but into a ſameneſs with the firſt. Let us deſcend into ſome particulars concerning the original and progreſs

* —Si cadens adoraveris me. MATTH. chap. iv.

of this theology. If it is matter of curioſity, it is matter of importance too.

I SAID that the pagan doctrine of a trinity was more antient than tradition. But, if we could believe thoſe ingenious perſons, who find whatever they have a mind to find in the Bible, we ſhould believe it to have been not a pagan but a jewiſh doctrine, not a philoſophical hypotheſis, but a divine revelation, not only older than tradition, but as old as the memorials MOSES had of the creation. We are told in the firſt chapter of Geneſis, that when God cloſed the work of the creation, he ſaid, "Let us make man after our "image and likeneſs *:" and altho he is made to ſpeak, on the ſame ſubject, in the ſingular number, immediately afterwards, yet chriſtian divines aſſure us that the Father addreſſed himſelf in theſe words to the Son and Holy Ghoſt, or to the firſt of them at leaſt, and not to angels, or any inferior intelligences, as he is ſaid to have done in the Timaeus of PLATO. This difference may deſerve our obſervation the more, becauſe PLATO in his writings acknowledged a trinity; whereas there is no direct nor clear hint, and much leſs any expreſs declaration, of a trinity in this place, nor in any other part of the writings of MOSES. There are indeed, among a multitude of vague and obſcure expreſſions in the books of the Old Teſtament, ſome that ſeem to intimate, like this, a plu-

* Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et ſimilitudinem noſtram.

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rality of divine beings: and theſe have been hawled to ſignify the chriſtian trinity, tho they were too equivocal and too dark to ſerve the purpoſe of leading men to the diſcovery of it, and therefore to ſerve any purpoſe at all. But the divines I have mentioned would do well to conſider that they have as much leſs right to conclude that the authors of theſe books, wherein the unity of the godhead is every where eſtabliſhed, meant to teach a plurality of hypoſtaſes in it, which they aſſert, than any man would have to conclude from paſſages, that ſpeak of God in the ſingular number, in books where polytheiſm is conſtantly aſſerted, that theſe authors meant to teach the unity of the godhead; which theſe divines deny that they did. He who is perſuaded, as I am, that many of thoſe, who were polytheiſts in one ſenſe, were monotheiſts in another, might aſſert the latter propoſition without any abſurdity. But theſe divines cannot aſſert either without the greateſt, and eſpecially ſince they know in how vague and looſe a ſenſe the word god is employed in the ſcriptures, where it ſignifies ſometimes a king or a chief magiſtrate, a prophet, or a meſſenger from God, as we find in Exodus *, in Samuel †, in the Pſalms §, in the Goſpel of St. JOHN ‖, and perhaps in other places.

BUT, beſides, if the doctrine of a trinity was found in expreſs terms in the Pentateuch, we might

* Exod. chap. iv. ver. 16. Ibid. chap. vii. ver. 1.
† 1 SAM. chap. xxviii. ver. 13. § Pſalm lxxxi.
‖ Goſp. St. JOHN chap. x. ver. 34.

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be ſurpriſed, with ſome reaſon, that Moses had taught it to a people ſo ſtrongly addicted, as the Iſraelites were, to the worſhip of many gods, and ſo little able to conceive the equality of three to one, and of one to three, a trinity in an unity, and an unity in a trinity; to a people to whom he would not teach the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul and of a future ſtate, on account of the many ſuperſtitions which this doctrine had begot in Egypt, as we muſt believe, or believe that he knew nothing of it, or aſſign ſome whimſical reaſon of this omiſſion. But even in this caſe, which ſuppoſes an expreſs mention of the trinity in the Pentateuch, we could frame no concluſive argument to prove this doctrine moſaical in it's origin. The religion, as well as government, of the Egyptians was more antient than that of Moses. He was learned in both; he borrowed from both; and no man of common ſenſe can believe it more probable, whatever he may pretend, that the ſlaves inſtructed their maſters, than that the maſters inſtructed their ſlaves. If an expreſs mention of the trinity was made in other parts of the Old Teſtament, the argument would be ſtill leſs concluſive, becauſe the Jews had been acquainted with ſchools wherein this doctrine was taught, either as an hidden or public doctrine, long before theſe books were renewed by Esdras, I uſe biſhop Huet's* expreſſion, before ſome of them were writ perhaps, and before the canon of them was

* In Demon. evang. "inſtauravit."

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completed, we know very certainly neither by whom nor when.

If this doctrine was not mosaical, neither was it platonical in it's origin, and much less was it invented by the latter Platonists in imitation of the christian trinity. PLATO speaks of one most simple being, the first intelligible. He speaks of a first mind, and a first soul, that soul of the world, some materials of which were left by God in the bowl †, in which he made it, to be mingled up into the souls of men; for it was but reasonable that the soul of man should be less perfect than the soul of the universe. That PLATO was sincerely a dogmatist I am far from believing, and I have on this head more regard to TULLY than to St. AUSTIN. But the latter Platonicians, who were such, caught this doctrine, like others of his theological and metaphysical whimsies, for in him and them they were whimsies, in that style. They were often a little less intelligible than he. What we do not understand in PLATO, we must not expect to understand better in PLOTINUS, in JAMBLICHUS, in PROCLUS, nor in the summary of his doctrine by ALCINOUS, nor, in short, in any of those writers whose heads have been turned with pythagorean and platonic theology. It was all the unmeaning jargon of egyptian and eastern metaphysics, and it did not acquire more meaning and perspicuity among the Greeks. On the contrary, I can easily persuade myself that this jargon became still more obscure by the supposed im-

† Crater is the word MARS. FICIN. uses.

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provements of grecian philoſophy. But ſtill the firſt principles of it, and of this doctrine in particular, were more antient than the philoſophical aera in Greece. STRABO ſays that the colleges of the egyptian prieſts were deſert in his time: and he lived two or three centuries ſooner than PLOTINUS, PORPHYRY, and JAMBLICHUS. But there is no color to conclude from hence that the theology theſe prieſts had taught was loſt and forgot when theſe philoſophers aroſe among others, and the ſchool of Alexandria flouriſhed. There were men ſtill famous for their knowledge, an ABAMMON, an ANEBO for inſtance; and JAMBLICHUS, who anſwered PORPHYRY's enquiries in a manner too myſterious not to be genuine, cites the authority of egyptian ſcriptures and traditions. The author of the Intellectual ſyſtem mentions a paſſage, which we may well take on his word without conſulting the original, wherein JAMBLICHUS ſpeaks plainly of three divine hypoſtaſes in the egyptian theology: EICTON, an indiviſible unity worſhiped in ſilence: EMEPH, the ſame probably as KNEPH: and HAMMON or PTHA, or OSIRIS, an active principle that was called by different names according to the different powers and energies aſcribed to it. Theſe were the PHANES, URANUS, and CRONUS, of ORPHEUS; the three gods praiſed by the Pythagoricians. Theſe were the three kings, the firſt good, the firſt mind, and the firſt ſoul, of PLATO: PYTHAGORAS had been inſtructed in the orphic myſteries by AGLAOPHEMUS: and PLATO was the next who received a perfect knowledge of all theſe divine

vine things out of the pythagoric and orphic writings, according to the teſtimony of PROCLUS, in the firſt of his ſix books concerning the platonic philoſophy.

THUS it appears that the notion of a trinity made a part of egyptian theology, and had been communicated to the Greeks even by ORPHEUS, that is, five or ſix centuries before the babylonian captivity, and therefore long before ESDRAS, and long after HERMES. It is not worth while to make any obſervation on theſe dates, which would admit of ſeveral, nor to ſpeak of the zoroaſtrian, chaldaic, or ſamothracian trinities any farther, than to obſerve that DEMOCRITUS had written a commentary on the ſacred letters of the Babylonians, and that both he and HOSTANES, who lived in the time of XERXES, and was himſelf a Chaldean, had taught the philoſophy of that people or ſect to the Greeks, and that this philoſophy was underſtood to comprehend all the learning of the eaſt. I proceed rather to obſerve that this doctrine was taught with ſo much confuſion, that the three gods were ſpoken of ſometimes collectively, and that at other times each of them was ſpoken of alone. The ſecond was ſometimes, and moſt frequently, reputed the maker of this viſible world. He was repreſented at other times to be to the firſt god what light is to the ſun: and I have read that ATHANASIUS employed this compariſon after the heathen divines, tho it be abſurd even to ridicule in his ſyſtem or in theirs. Sometimes the third hypoſtaſis

hypoſtaſis was ſpoken of as the maker of all things according to patterns exiſting in the ſecond; and at other times only as a ſoul which animated the material world, and which together with it compoſed one mighty animal. But the general run of opinion was different and more uniform. None of theſe heathen trinitarians had ever imagined three gods eſſentially one, and one god eſſentially three. Whenever they ſpoke of three hypoſtaſes, they all ſuppoſed them diſtinct and ſubordinate. RAPIN * acknowledges that PROCLUS did diſtinguiſh them ſo; but he aſſerts that PLOTINUS did not. Whence the jeſuit took this, I am ignorant. But it is certain that far from confounding them, or ſaying that they were all one god, PLOTINUS has ſaid the very contrary in many places, and particularly where he approves PLATO's explanation of the doctrine of PARMENIDES, and teaches a firſt, ſecond, and third unity in ſubordination.

SECTION XXVIII.

SINCE I have ſaid ſo much on this ſubject, I will juſt mention ſome of the notions which theſe pneumatical madmen, Heathens, Jews, and Chriſtians, entertained concerning ſpiritual natures inferior to theſe. I obſerve then that an affectation of inveſtigating and explaining the original and firſt principles of things was the reigning folly of antient philoſophers. Thus the ſyſtems of coſmogony were, like that of HESIOD, ſo many

* Comp. de PLATON et ARISTOTE.

ſyſtems

ſyſtems of theogony; and the phyſiology of the univerſe was nothing better than a wild rhapſody of fables and allegories. When theſe would not paſs, except on the ignorant and ſuperſtitious vulgar, they proceeded to a more refined manner of philoſophiſing. What they could not account for by any knowledge they had of the ſenſible world, they endeavoured to account for by the hypotheſes they framed of an intellectual world. The ſenſible phaenomena here below, to ſpeak according to their conceptions, paſſed before them, and diſappeared like the figures of a moving picture. They ſaw nothing permanent, nothing primarily efficient, a multitude of effects, no cauſe. They looked up to the heavens. Their ſenſes were ſtruck. They were ſurpriſed into idolatry firſt, they admired afterwards; and the more they examined, the more they admired. But their reaſon was not ſatisfied, nor the ends of their enquiries attained. Their reaſon was not ſatisfied, becauſe they diſcovered nothing but effects above, as well as below, no ſelf-exiſtent, ſelf-moving, and intelligent cauſes. The ends of their enquiries were not attained, becauſe they enquired after ſuch cauſes as theſe, inſtead of reſolving all ultimately into the infinite wiſdom and power of one firſt efficient cauſe, which is the proper concluſion of every phyſical enquiry. It ſolves every difficulty to a reaſonable mind, that has enquired as far as the phaenomena lead us; and if it did not, the want of a ſufficient reaſon in them would be no reaſon for ſeeking one out of them.

them. It would be a reaſon for ſtopping all enquiry.

HERE we may fix the beginning of metaphyſics. The ends of their reſearches were unattainable. Phyſics could not reach to them. But, inſtead of abandoning theſe objects, philoſophers reſolved to change their method, to begin where they had hoped in vain to end, and to invent what they had flattered themſelves that they ſhould diſcover. For this purpoſe the ideas of PLATO were deviſed, which ſome imagine to be the ſame with the numbers of PYTHAGORAS *. The firſt ſtrangely abſurd, the ſecond quite unintelligible. I ſhall ſpeak, therefore, of the firſt alone. Now the ſecond hypoſtaſis, or the firſt mind, is according to this hypotheſis an architypal world, which contains intelligibly all that is contained ſenſibly in our world. Theſe are the things which truly are: and the phaenomena, which appear realities to ſenſe, are nothing more than their faint, tranſient, and fallacious images. Theſe are the eternal, immutable patterns of things; not only of ſimple ideas which we receive, but of complex ideas which we make; not only of ſubſtances, but of modes and relations. There is a firſt whiteneſs, or a firſt ſweetneſs, as there is a firſt pulchritude, or a firſt gratitude, a firſt bigneſs or a firſt littleneſs. Theſe are, therefore, the true objects of ſcience. Some of the heathen divines ſuppoſed every one of theſe

* BRUC. De convenientia numerorum PYTHAG. cum ideis PLAT.

pretended

pretended abſtract ideas to be a firſt principle or a divine being, and there are chriſtian divines who ſcruple not to talk of them as of eternal incorporeal eſſences, independent of God himſelf. PLATO erected a myſtic ladder, and he makes SOCRATES adviſe his auditors to climb by it into the region of forms, that is, from opinion to knowledge. MALEBRANCHE has no need of it. Things out of the mind he ſees in God; and concerning things in it, he interrogates the Logos.

PYTHAGORAS and PLATO had learned of their eaſtern maſters, and had taught others, to imagine a confuſed multitude of ſpiritual natures beſides theſe, and beſides the three firſt principles, under the different names of gods, angels, demons, and genii, ſpirits above the moon, good, happy, and immortal; and ſpirits below the moon, where death, miſery, and all that is evil reſides. In this ſyſtem all is intelligible above, all is ſenſible below. Nor was this number of gods and other ſpiritual natures confuſed alone: it was indefinite too, and liable to be increaſed as philoſophical purpoſes, and public or even private ſuperſtition, required. The latter Pythagoricians and Platoniſts, whom I confound becauſe their doctrines were confounded together, far from ſoftening the groſs and moſt palpable abſurdities of which we have ſpoken, imagined, beſides all theſe beings, and immaterial entities reſiding in the firſt mind, an inconceivable number of aeons, that is, of immortal ſpiritual beings proceeding by irradiation,

emanation, or ſome other metaphyſical generation, from the firſt being, and inhabiting the heavens and the ſtars. Thus if they did not determine the number of ſpiritual natures in general, as the number of angels was not determined by the Jews, they reduced them into determinate claſſes at leaſt, and made them more apparently, and more immediately, dependent on the three hypoſtaſes that compoſed their deity. Theſe were not called gods indeed, tho they might have paſſed for ſuch, of the generated kind at leaſt; and tho there were ſome perſons who held the four firſt aeons to be the tetrade of PYTHAGORAS, nay tho ſome were abſurd enough to call the firſt ſelf-exiſting ſpirit an aeon, that is, an emanation, and therefore a contradiction as monſtrous as that imputed to the Sabellians, who aſſumed, it has been ſaid, that God the father was his own ſon, and God the ſon his own father. But the word god began to be more ſparingly uſed, and for that reaſon theſe doctrines might be, as they were, the more eaſily received by many who profeſſed chriſtianity. The Jews, I ſuppoſe, might hold theſe emanations, flowing from the divine eſſence, like beams from the ſun, juſt as well as their ten ſuperior lights called ſephiroth; and the Chriſtians might well admit aeons into their ſyſtem, ſince they, as well as the Jews, admitted cherubim and ſeraphim, archangels and angels. From the hypotheſis, therefore, of a trinity of ſupreme but ſubordinate gods, ſubordinate to one another, a trinity of ranks or orders of beings was derived: a multitude of unities proceeding from the firſt unity, and

ſuperior

ſuperior to the firſt mind; a multitude of minds proceeding from the firſt mind, and ſuperior to the firſt ſoul; a multitude of ſouls proceeding from the firſt ſoul, and ſuperior to all other natures; for they dreamed too of an univerſal nature ſometimes, I know not whether in or out of the Deity, from which all particular natures and all plaſtic principles flowed.

By theſe means ſufficient proviſion was made for ſuperſtition and theological ſpeculations. The ſame preſumption, and the ſame miſapplication and abuſe of human reaſon, that miſled the heathen, miſled the chriſtian world, and erected the moſt extravagant hypotheſes, that delirious imaginations could frame, into dogmas concerning divine and ſpiritual nature. The heathen had in their power that rule of enquiry, and that criterion of truth, which God has given to all his rational creatures in the manifeſtation of his nature and attributes, as far as we are able to collect them from the ſyſtem of his works, and from the courſe of his providence. It was therefore a great preſumption, and a great abuſe of reaſon, in thoſe philoſophers, to neglect this rule and this criterion; to enquire often without one, and to judge often againſt the other. But the chriſtian divines have done worſe. They have another rule, and another criterion, beſides theſe, ſupernatural as well as natural revelation, the word as well as the works of God. One of theſe might carry their knowledge farther than the other, and it carries indeed this kind of knowledge, ſuch as it is, a great way; but they were in-

excuſable when they pretended to acquire any knowledge, on ſuch important and awful ſubjects eſpecially, beyond both. They did it however. Metaphyſical heathens and cabaliſtical Jews impoſed their reveries on chriſtian fathers; and they impoſed them on the whole chriſtian church, mingled up with thoſe of their own overheated brains.

But there is another cauſe of this pneumatical madneſs to be mentioned. It was not due alone to the fondneſs philoſophers had of ſeeming to account metaphyſically for what they could not account phyſically; it was due likewiſe to a fondneſs of another kind, to a fondneſs of making man paſs for one of thoſe beings that participated of the divine nature. This had long poſſeſſed the heathen theiſts, and it poſſeſſed the Chriſtians with more advantage. Neither of them pretended to ſuch conſtant communications, and familiar converſations with the Supreme Being, as the Jews did; tho both of them boaſted of divine influences, of inſpirations, and of revelations made to them ſleeping and waking. But then both of them boaſted a natural, tho diſtant relation, with the Supreme Being, not only the moral relation of creatures to their creator, but the natural relation of deſcendants to their common anceſtor, a cognation, as Cudworth calls it, a ſort of ſpiritual conſanguinity. Several hypotheſes had lengthened the chain of being very far from God downwards: and as divinity had been hawled down, humanity had been

been hoiſted up, ſometimes by groſs and corporeal repeeſentations, ſometimes by ſuch as were more refined and ſpiritual. Man was made after the image of God in more ſyſtems than one, or rather God was made after the image of man. The anthropomorphite hereſy repreſented him with all the members, the ſhape, and figure of an human body; and how the idolatrous heathens repreſented all their gods, and none more than JUPITER himſelf, in human bodies, and in human operations, is enough known. But there were other ſyſtems in which the ſimilitude and natural relation between God and man were repreſented under images more refined and ſpiritual.

IN the jewiſh ſyſtem, however we underſtand the words of MOSES, the Supreme Being made the body of man of the dirt of the earth. But the human ſoul was a portion of divine breath, "divinae "particula aurae." God breathed it into his face, and he became a living ſoul*; as God is ſaid, in ſcripture language, to be the living God. In the platonic ſyſtem, inferior intelligences were commiſſioned to make the whole animal kind, leſt they ſhould have been all immortal; but God reſerved to himſelf the ſoul of man, which he made of the ſame ſubſtance as the ſoul of the univerſe, only a little leſs perfect, as it has been ſaid. In the ſyſtem we ſpeak of, the divinity is allied to humanity as effectually as the pride of man could deſire, as ef-

* Inſpiravit in faciem ejus ſpiraculum vitae, et factus eſt homo in animam viventem.

fectually as in either of theſe. We aſſume, and the latter Platonicians as well as their founder aſſumed, that man is compounded of body and ſoul. As PLATO aſſerted that all ſouls were made at once, ſo they aſſerted that all ſouls were made of the ſame nature. Human ſouls, therefore, proceeding from the firſt ſoul, which was ſometimes confounded with, and ſometimes diſtinguiſhed from, the ſoul of the univerſe, and this ſoul being ſuperior to all natures, except the minds proceeding from the firſt mind, and the unities proceeding from the firſt unity, the relation between God and man was not very remote; whether they thought that the three hypoſtaſes compoſed one deity, as two ſubſtances compoſed one man; or whether they thought that the three were diſtinct ſubordinate ſubſiſtencies, and the ſoul the loweſt of them. The relation, I ſay, was not very remote either way; and theſe philoſophers might think their hypotheſis the more decent for not making this relation cloſer. PROCLUS, therefore, or PLOTINUS, or one of that tribe, had reaſon, you ſee, on this plan of theology, to call the ſoul of the world the elder ſiſter of the human ſoul: and if ORIGEN did not come fully up to all theſe extravagances, he came very near to them, when he aſſerted that there was no difference, but that of merit, between the ſouls of archangels and angels, of devils and of men. The ſoul of CHRIST, according to this father, who was perhaps the greateſt of the fathers, was of the ſame nature as all other rational ſouls, and was inſeparably united with God,

God, or made one with the Word *, only on account of ſuperior merit in a pre-exiſting ſtate.

THUS human pride, as well as human curioſity, was indulged by heathen philoſophers and by platoniſing Chriſtians. They grew up into a ſort of pneumatical madneſs, or metaphyſics were the dotage of phyſics: take which of the images you pleaſe. What theſe wild or dreaming philoſophers could not do by any hypotheſis about body, they attempted to do by the hypotheſis of a ſoul: and, ſince they could not make man participant of the divine nature by his body, however animated up to rationality, or with whatever adventitious powers they might ſuppoſe it endued, they thought fit to add a diſtinct ſpiritual to his corporeal ſubſtance, and to aſſume him to be a compound of both. A great variety of hypotheſes was built on this one; but immortality was common to them all. In all of them, man was allied to God by ſome metaphyſical genealogy: and even thoſe of them, which, giving him immortality, expoſed him to eternal damnation by it, were fondly received. He who conſiders what our manner of knowing is, what the faculties of our minds are, what the means we have of acquiring knowledge are; and how uncertain, how precarious, how confined it is in the higheſt degree of it; will think the ſoul as unfit to be participant of the divine nature as the body. Nay PLATO, whom I

* —— inſeparabilem cum Deo fecerit unitatem—cum Verbo Dei unum efficitur. ORIG. De princip. lib. i.

quote on theſe occaſions, inſtar omnium, was ſo little able to prove the exiſtence and immortality of the ſoul, and talked ſo much nonſenſe about the eſſence and eſſential properties of it, that he was obliged to have recourſe from natural to moral arguments, which are indeed more plauſible, but not more concluſive.

WHEN theſe notions were once eſtabliſhed, it was no hard matter to perſuade men, nay it was no hard matter for thoſe, who had a diſpoſition and a temper of brain prone to enthuſiaſm, to perſuade themſelves, that by various methods of purification, and by intenſe meditation, which were in truth ſo many methods of growing mad, they could abſtract themſelves from all ſenſible objects, wrap themſelves up in pure intellect, and be united to the Supreme Being. This madneſs has prevailed, and ſtill prevails, under ſome form or other, and with little difference, in the eaſt and in the weſt, among Chriſtians and heathens, among the orthodox and heretics. I need not quote inſtances. They have been frequent and notorious in China, in the Eaſt Indies, and in Europe. PYTHAGORAS and PLATO taught that the ſupreme good of men was to be like God, and to be gods at laſt. Such opinions as theſe were held, with ſome variety of expreſſion more than of ſubſtance, by the Manicheans and other heretics. The moſt orthodox fathers ſpoke of the communion of men with God, as of a myſtery unknown indeed to men and angels till it was revealed, but ſuſpected by the heathen

heathen philoſophers, who were impelled to deſire it by a natural inſtinct. A ſtrange aſſertion this muſt appear, and equally falſe in every part. The communion of man with God was not a ſuſpicion, it was a dogma, true or falſe, and an article of the platonic faith: for PLATO, too, required faith in traditional doctrines. It was not any particular inſtinct, that impelled the heathen to deſire this communion; it was their pride and abſurdity, the very human affections and paſſions from which theſe men pretended to be freed, that produced this preſumptuous deſire.

SUCH extravagant doctrines concerning divine and ſpiritual natures being taught with much confuſion in the ſchools of heathen theology, they could not fail to be taught in thoſe of chriſtianity with the ſame confuſion, and to produce all the different opinions, that divided the chriſtian church. None of them knew very diſtinctly what they meant by the word ſpirit and ſpiritual ſubſtance, which were ſo often in their mouths. That they meant in general nothing more than breath, like animal breath, and a thin ſubtile matter that eſcaped human ſight in the ordinary way of ſeeing, is evident. They ſaid after ZOROASTER and the magi, that God was original light, or an intelligent fire. They ſaid that this light was incorporeal; and yet they talked of it in ſuch a manner as deſcribed a very corporeal light, inviſible, however, to all eyes that were not fortified like thoſe that enjoy the beatific viſion. In

ſhort,

ſhort, ſpirituality did not imply incorporeity; and if one of thoſe great divines was at hand to be aſked what he meant by ſpiritual ſubſtance, he would anſwer in ſome metaphyſical jargon; he would tell us, perhaps, that it is a ſubſtance "ab "eſſentialitate ſucciſa," which are words I have read, but cannot tranſlate.

SECTION XXIX.

BUT it is time I ſhould return to ſpeak of the trinity, and to ſhew what diſcordant opinions aroſe about it among the Chriſtians; for among the heathens, tho there were different opinions, yet it was rather a ſecret doctrine, in which philoſophers inſtructed their ſcholars behind the curtain, than a doctrine which they publiſhed to all men indifferently. Now it is impoſſible to conceive any thing more monſtrous than ſome of theſe opinions, or more litigated, or longer unſettled than others. The leaſt we have to obſerve of this kind is about the firſt hypoſtaſis, and yet ſomething of this kind is to be obſerved about that. For inſtance, tho we cannot explain God's manner of being, and tho to attempt it is unpardonable preſumption, yet we may, and we muſt aſſert, that he is not a ſyſtem of matter; becauſe there ariſe, from the contrary ſuppoſition, a multitude of abſurdities, that cannot deſtroy the demonſtration of his exiſtence, but that are inconſiſtent with it: notwithſtanding which, the fathers of the church ſpoke of him ſometimes in ſuch terms, that

that to make out any ſenſe in what they ſaid, we muſt underſtand them to have thought him material, at leaſt not immaterial; and what they thought him then, it is not poſſible to conceive.

BUT the various doctrines that were taught about the ſecond and third hypoſtaſis, the ſecond eſpecially, are ſtill more beyond all conception extravagant and profane. Concerning theſe, and one or two more, it is neceſſary that I ſhould deſcend into ſome particulars, in order to ſhew, not only that private authority has impoſed private opinions, that is, hereſies, but that public authority, the authority of the whole chriſtian church, has impoſed opinions which, are, therefore, deemed orthodox; altho many of them are as abſurd as any of thoſe which are deemed heretical, many of them as diſputable, many of them as little warranted by the Goſpel, and many of them as incompatible with true theiſm; becauſe if they do not deny God, they do ſomething as bad, nay worſe in PLUTARCH'S ſenſe and in common ſenſe, they defame him. From a conſideration of ſome few of theſe opinions and doctrines it will appear how unſafely we truſt, in matters of religion, to the authority of other men, which may lead us, and has led all thoſe who have ſubmitted to it, under pretence of making them better Chriſtians, to be little if at all better than atheiſts. From a contemplation of the conſequences of theſe opinions and doctrines it will appear that theology has made Chriſtianity ridiculous to men of

of ſenſe, I mean the chriſtianity that has been eſtabliſhed by eccleſiaſtical and civil authority; and a perpetual bone of contention to fools. It will appear that the atheiſtical objection to religion, which has been mentioned, groundleſs as it is, receives a color from the inventions and the conduct of that order of men, who have arrogated to themſelves, excluſively of all others, the name and the power of a church, and whom Chriſtians are accuſtomed to think and to call the church.

THERE have been reports, for ſuch ſtories deſerve to be eſteemed no more, that SIMON, who was a ſamaritan, declared himſelf among that people to be the Father, among the Jews to be the Son, and among the Gentiles to be the Holy Ghoſt; that he paſſed the operations of his magical art for miracles, and that he broke his neck at laſt in attempting to fly before NERO, notwithſtanding which he was adored at Rome. This latter circumſtance, indeed, was founded on a blunder that has been ſince detected; tho it impoſed on JUSTIN the martyr in the ſecond century, and, which is much more ſtrange, on ERASMUS * in the ſixteenth. MONTANUS pretended to be the paraclete in the third century; or that God, who had preached and ſuffered in CHRIST, inhabited by the Holy Ghoſt in him. The excuſe he made for coming ſo late, when JESUS had promiſed that he ſhould come ſo much ſooner, was the

* Vid. Ep. DCCCXXXI. in IRENAEUM.

unpre-

unpreparedneſs of the world to receive any ſooner that auſterity of religious obſervances which he preſcribed and practiſed. They were incredibly great, and ſuch as may render it probable that this impoſtor died the death of the traytor JUDAS, that he hanged himſelf in a fit of deſpair, as chriſtian writers have affirmed. Such tales as theſe would not deſerve to be mentioned, if they did not ſerve to ſhew the fanatical ſpirit of thoſe ages, and to take off our wonder at all the hereſies that aroſe in the chriſtian church, by obſerving how eaſy it was to ſuppoſe a divine miſſion, or even to aſſume in opinion a divine nature. The appearance of falſe prophets, as well as their ſucceſs in ſeducing, had been foretold; and it was the character of the times which encouraged one, and promoted the other.

THESE falſe prophets were very numerous, and their ſucceſs very various. But there was no article of chriſtian faith and doctrine which admitted of ſo much doubt and diſpute, as the divinity of CHRIST firſt, and his rank in the godhead afterwards. CERINTHUS denied his divine nature. MENANDER aſſerted that he was a true man. SATURNINUS, that he was only the ſhadow and appearance of a man. BASILIDES, that the CHRIST did not ſuffer, but that he took the form of another, of SIMON of Cyrene, I think, who ſuffered under his form whilſt he ſtood by and laughed at his own ſuppoſed crucifixion. EBION maintained, like MENANDER, that CHRIST was a mere man,

man, the ſon of JOSEPH. In calling him a good or a juſt man, he had the authority of St. PETER on his ſide, who calls him ſo in one place of the Acts; and even this he did not want: but in denying his reſurrection from the dead, as he did when he affirmed that the body of CHRIST remained in the grave, tho his ſoul went to heaven, he had this great apoſtolical authority againſt him *. In fine, and to fill up the meaſure of heretical phrenſy, the Sethites held that the ſame perſon had been SETH firſt, and was JESUS afterwards; and the Ophitae, as they were called, that he had been the ſerpent who tempted EVE; ſo that he, who redeemed mankind by his blood, had made redemption neceſſary by his wiles, according to theſe madmen.

THAT there were no madmen at the ſame time among the beſt and moſt orthodox Chriſtians, if it may be ſaid with truth that any orthodox belief was ſettled ſo ſoon, we muſt not believe. There were many ſuch, and the proofs are at hand, both in their writings, and much more in the anecdotes concerning them. But that which deſerves our particular obſervation is, that the madneſs of thoſe who are reputed orthodox never ran ſo high, as it did after the orthodox belief on this great article had been ſettled; if propoſitions, the very terms of which are ſometimes ambiguous and ſometimes quite unintelligible, may be

* —Virum probatum a Deo, juſtum a mortuis ſuſcitatum.

ſaid

ſaid to have been ſettled. Certain it is, that after this the orthodox fathers held ſuch language about the incarnation of CHRIST, as many of thoſe who were reputed heretics would have ſcrupled modeſtly and piouſly to have uſed. Theſe words, the ſon of God, were underſtood figuratively, I preſume, and not literally in the caſe of FOE, who aſſumed this appellation in India a thouſand years before the coming of CHRIST; and in the caſe of ZOROASTER, who aſſumed it in Perſia, perhaps, as antiently. They muſt have been underſtood even thus very falſely, in both thoſe caſes. But they might have been ſo underſtood, with ſome propriety of figure, in the caſe of CHRIST, who was at leaſt the Meſſiah promiſed by God, foretold by the prophets, and ſent in due time. If this had been the judgment of the church, the principal difficulties about his incarnation had been anticipated, as they were by the Neſtorians, who held that there were two perſons, and not two natures only, in CHRIST, and who denied that the virgin was the mother of God. But the church having determined that theſe words, the ſon of God, ſhould be taken in their literal ſenſe, it is aſtoniſhing to conſider what profanations, followed concerning this ſecond generation of the ſon; for the firſt had been before all worlds, that is, from all eternity. Theſe profanations collected from the moſt approved writers alone, to ſay nothing of the creeds that are ſo ſolemnly recited in chriſtian churches, would fill a volume. I ſhall mention a few only, which they, who are at all converſant

verſant in the writings of antient and modern divines, will acknowledge to be fairly quoted.

IT has been ſaid then by the moſt orthodox *, piouſly and reverently too, as they and other divines aſſure us, "that the Father having choſen "the virgin MARY for this ſecond generation of "the Son, he loved her as his ſpouſe; he em- "ployed the angel GABRIEL, whom he made his "pronubus or paranymphus, that is, his bride- "man, to procure her conſent, without which "there can be no lawful marriage; and having "obtained it, his virtue overſhadowed her, which "he tempered ſo that her human nature might "be able to ſupport the divine embracement. "In this private embracement, ſhe conceived, the "holy ſpirit flowing into her, and producing the "effect of human ſeed. Thus the child partook "of the two natures of his parents, the divine "nature of his father, and the human nature of "his mother." In ſuch groſs terms, and under ſuch groſs images, has the myſtery of the incarnation been explained. The words of St. AMBROSE are too obſcene to be tranſlated. Take them in latin therefore. "Non enim, ſays this modeſt archbiſhop, "virilis coitus vulvae virgi- "nalis ſecreta reſeravit, ſed immaculatum ſemen "inviolabili utero ſpiritus ſanctus infudit." St. AUSTIN ſoftens the terms, and changes the image a little. But if he does not appear quite ſo obſcene, he muſt appear at leaſt as mad as the

* ERASM. adv. ep. LUTHERI.

others.

others. "God ſpoke by his angel, ſays this "ſaint, and the virgin was got with child by "the ear *." There were thoſe who aſſerted that CHRIST did not aſſume his body in the virgin's womb, but that he brought it from heaven, and paſſed through her as water paſſes through a pipe †. They were called heretics for their pains: and yet ſurely that doctrine might have been ſung or ſaid in the churches as decently, and with as much edification, as thoſe hymns were, in one of which it was ſaid that the virgin conceived, "non ex virili ſemine, ſed myſtico ſpiramine;" and in the other, that the Word or Logos entered at her ear, "et exivit per auream portam."

SUCH extravagant and profane notions and expreſſions, as have been laſt mentioned, came into faſhion chiefly after the nicean council, which CONSTANTINE thought it neceſſary to convene. How ill he judged, and how ill his ſucceſſors judged on ſimilar occaſions, long and woful experience has manifeſted. What paſſed before his time ſhewed that attempts to explain divine myſteries muſt be of neceſſity endleſs; and what paſſed in and after his time, that it is to no purpoſe, at leaſt to no good purpoſe, to impoſe any authoriſed definitions of them. What revelation leaves a myſtery muſt remain ſuch: and there cannot be a greater abſurdity than to imagine that

* Deus loquebatur per ſuum angelum, et virgo per aurem impraegnabatur.

† AUG. De tem. ſerm. 22.

human authority, call it how you pleaſe, ought to determine, or will determine, to ſubmiſſion thoſe who think that ſuch definitions are not conformable to their true criterion, which is the revelation itſelf. The only difference is this. The men who diſpute and wrangle on ſuch points as theſe, wherein neither morality nor good government are concerned, cannot do much hurt, if they are left to diſpute and wrangle among themſelves; whereas, if public authority takes notice of them ſo far, as to meddle in their quarrels, and to decide any way, civil diſorders are ſure to follow, and the blood of nations is ſpilled in wars and maſſacres, to extinguiſh a flame which ſome hot-headed prieſt, or delirious metaphyſician, has kindled, and which it does not extinguiſh neither.

WHAT revelation leaves a myſtery muſt remain ſuch: and if any thing was ever left a myſtery, the doctrine of the trinity was ſo. CHRIST had no where called himſelf God. His apoſtles called him Lord*. PETER had once declared him to be a man: and PAUL preaching to the Athenians ſpeaks of him rather as a man than as God. He makes no mention of the Son of God, or of the Holy Ghoſt. Theſe inconſiſtent writers talk often a different language on the ſame ſubject, and contradict in one place what they have ſaid in another. How they came to do ſo in this caſe, let others account; but let them account for this conduct of the apoſtles better than

* ERAS. ubi ſupra.

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the greateſt antient and modern divines have done. According to them, PETER was afraid of ſcandaliſing the Jews. The Jews believed one God, had never heard of the Son or Holy Ghoſt, and would have been revolted againſt chriſtianity more than they were, if they had heard the man, whom they had ſeen crucified and buried, called God. PAUL was afraid of confirming the Gentiles in their polytheiſm by preaching to them that CHRIST was God. The prudence of this method, by which the young in CHRIST were fed with milk, and thoſe of riper years with ſolid food, for the whole myſtery was revealed to them, has been extremely applauded by the moſt approved doctors of the church. I am unwilling, however, to take this for the reaſon of the conduct which the two apoſtles held. It ſavours too much of an outward and inward doctrine, the double dealing of pagan divines. It ſeems unworthy of men commiſſioned by CHRIST, inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt, and able to inforce all they taught by miracles. It bears too near a reſemblance to the unrighteous cunning of the jeſuits, who are ſaid to conceal the humiliation and paſſion of the ſaviour from their neophytes in China. But whatever reaſon the apoſtles had for it, which they who boaſt to be their ſucceſſors have no right to determine, this was their conduct. The divinity of the Word grew by ſlow degrees into general belief among Chriſtians: the divinity of the Holy Ghoſt by degrees ſtill ſlower, and the co-equality and conſubſtantiality of the three hy-

poſtaſes laſt of all. It fared with the Son, in the firſt ages of chriſtianity, much as it has fared ſince with the mother of God. Strong figurative expreſſions, which the apoſtles employed on ſome, which other doctors and ſaints employed on all occaſions, and which were animated, doubtleſs, by the oppoſition of heathens, Jews, and heretics, might contribute to exalt the Son at the expence of the Father's ſupremacy; as we know very certainly that, by ſuch means and on ſuch motives as theſe, the virgin acquired the title of deipara; to whom, if ſhe is not a goddeſs avowed in expreſs terms, divine honors are paid, and her interceſſion is implored with the Father and the Son. She is ſo plainly diſtinguiſhed from both, that her interceſſion with either carries more propriety along with it, than the interceſſion of the Son with the Father; ſince theſe two conſubſtantial perſons cannot be intelligibly diſtinguiſhed from one another, and ſince it is of the utmoſt abſurdity to advance that the ſame perſon intercedes with himſelf.

WHAT has been ſaid will appear evidently true, if we look into the anecdotes of the apoſtolical and following ages; or if we conſult, with due diſcernment, thoſe who have made them their ſtudy. Many of the primitive Chriſtians, ſtruck with religious awe, had a very reaſonable ſcruple of uſing any appellations which were not contained in the ſcriptures. Many of them dared not give that of the true God to CHRIST before the nicean

nicean council, nor several after it: and even the most orthodox, who scrupled not to call him "very God of very God, begotten not made," when the council had pronounced, were still afraid to give this appellation to the Holy Ghost. Nay from the time that the Macedonians were condemned, soon after the Arians, in another council, and even to this hour, the Holy Ghost has not been deemed God by generation, but by procession or spiration, that is, by the breathing of the Father through the Son, or by the joint breathing of the Father and the Son; of which difference in an identity of nature we must be content to say what ERASMUS said, "satis est credere." In short, the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was never taught explicitly and positively by any divine authority. It was a vague opinion in heathen theology, which intended no more perhaps, than to personify the wisdom and goodness of the supreme omnipotent Being. It has been a theological dispute in all ages among Christians: and the precise definition, according to which we are obliged to profess that we believe it, is founded on authority entirely human, and therefore undeniably fallible, imperial and ecclesiastical authority.

IF it be said that the decisions in favor of the second and third hypostasis have been made by councils under the influence of the Holy Ghost, I shall only say, the question is begged ridiculously when the influence of the Holy Ghost is

ſuppoſed to prove the very point in diſpute, his divinity; and that they, therefore, muſt have no ſmall ſhare of ſtupidity, of ignorance, and effrontery, who can inſiſt on ſuch an anſwer in this age. If it be ſaid that the councils, which condemned the opinions of PAUL of Samoſata, of SABELLIUS, of ARIUS, of PHOTINUS, and of other heretics, were guided, in the canons they made, and the anathemas they pronounced, by the unerring rule of ſcripture and uniform tradition; I ſhall only aſk, what that ſcripture was? It was not the Old Teſtament moſt ſurely; for there is no reaſon to allow that this Teſtament contains any notices of the trinity. Was it the New Teſtament? But we may defy the ableſt chemiſt, that ever worked on thoſe materials, to extract from them ſuch a trinity, as that is which the chriſtian church acknowledges. Paſſages, that ſeem favorable to it in part, may be, as they have been, produced. But then paſſages, that are really inconſiſtent with it in the whole, may be, as they have been, oppoſed to theſe: and the famous adjective homoouſios will not be found conſecrated by ſcripture language; tho even this word does not ſignify very determinately what it has been applied to ſignify, if identity alone be the greateſt, and ſimilitude but a leſs unity, as the learned ſay *. As little grounds are there, in any part of the New Teſtament, even in the epiſtles of St. PAUL, for that impudent analyſis, which ſchool divines and others

* — Conſimilis eſſentiae. ERASM. Identitas maxima eſt unitas; minor unitas eſt ſimilitudo. MART. Lexic.

have

have preſumed to make of the Deity when they have talked ſo much nonſenſe about proceſſions or emanations, perſons, relations, notions, or terms, and the indwelling of theſe divine beings in one another. Certain figurative and vague expreſſions, of which there are many, have been picked up here and there, and have been dragged to countenance, if that was poſſible, ſuch opinions. Theology has ſolemniſed the reveries of enthuſiaſm in many inſtances. Let me quote one that occurs immediately to me. IGNATIUS, diſciple of St. JOHN, and biſhop of Antioch, was brought before TRAJAN. The emperor enquired who he was. The ſaint anſwered, that he was one who had gained the friendſhip of the Son of God, whom he carried about in his breaſt; as he might well do, ſince it was written, "I will dwell "and walk in them." TRAJAN condemned this theophorus, or god-carrier, to be expoſed to wild beaſts at Rome. It is not neceſſary that I ſhould make any applications of this ſtory to what I have ſaid of enthuſiaſm and theology. Almoſt daily experience will make them for me.

NOT only the ſcriptures, which are come down to us, are very far from being vouchers of the trinity we profeſs to believe; but we may aſſure ourſelves that many of the ſcriptures and traditions, that obtained credit in the primitive ages of chriſtianity, depoſed againſt this trinity. Scriptures ſtood in oppoſition to ſcriptures, and tradition was not uniform. There were various

goſpels, and various epiſtles. All theſe were compoſed and altered, received and rejected, according to the different traditions, and the different ſyſtems, of evangelical hiſtory and doctrine, that prevailed in different places, and among different perſons. Thus, for inſtance, EPIPHANIUS owns that SABELLIUS, who denied any diſtinction of perſons in the godhead, took his doctrines from the Goſpel of the Egyptians; and the Socinians of our age may boaſt that they derive their pedigree from PAUL of Samoſata, a great biſhop of the third century. This century, the latter part of it eſpecially, may be included in that character which ERASMUS gives of the fourth, and which will ſuit ſome others. "It was matter of "ingenuity to be a Chriſtian. Faith was rather "in the writings, than in the minds, of men: and "there were almoſt as many creeds, as perſons "that profeſſed chriſtianity." The diſputes concerning the divinity of CHRIST continued from the apoſtolical days to theſe, without any ecumenical deciſion. Then, indeed, there was one given by the council of Nicaea; which did not however decide, for a long time, nor even at laſt, by ſcripture and tradition, but by dint of perſecution, and by the force of the ſecular arm.

IT has been ſaid that the greateſt lights, which appeared in the chriſtian church after the apoſtles, appeared in and about the fourth century: to the end of which century at leaſt I think that we proteſtants concur, not very wiſely, with you papiſts

papiſts in reverencing fathers and councils. This judgment I ſhall not contradict, however, on the preſent occaſion. But then we muſt make it more impartially than it is generally made. For inſtance, ATHANASIUS, GREGORY of Nazianzum, CHRYSOSTOM, AMBROSIUS, AUGUSTIN, JEROM, were men of ſome parts and learning with extraordinary zeal. But ſo were ARIUS, EUSEBIUS of Nicomedia, the other EUSEBIUS of Caeſarea, PHOTINUS, and MACEDONIUS. That ſuch men as theſe ſhould be divided in their opinions concerning the trinity, cannot ſeem ſtrange to any perſon who conſiders the nature of this doctrine, how it came into the church, how it grew up there, and how open to diſpute it remained three hundred years after CHRIST. To believe three gods, three ſubſtances eſſentially different, or three ſubſiſtencies, as they were called by ſome, in the godhead, diſtinct and ſubordinate, the ſecond to the firſt, and the third to the ſecond, was not hard on the principles of heathen theology, in which ſuch a trinity had been taught. But on the principles of jewiſh and chriſtian theology, ſuch a belief could not be admitted without manifeſt inconſiſtency; and it is not conceivable that PHILO could reconcile PLATO and MOSES, when he talked of a ſecond god. To ſave this inconſiſtency, and to avoid as much as poſſible all appearance of polytheiſm, ſeveral expedients were deviſed. Some, like SABELLIUS and his maſter NOETUS, denied a diſtinction of perſons in the godhead: ſo that God the Father was, in the ſyſtem of theſe heretics,

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as it is ſaid, his own Son, and God the Son his own Father; nay the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, ſuffered together in the paſſion and perſon of CHRIST, ſince they were but one perſon under three notions and appellations. Some, like PAUL of Samoſata before the nicean council, and PHOTINUS at that time, or immediately after it, maintained that JESUS was called the Son of God only on account of his ſanctity; that the Word deſcended on him, and then returned to the Father; and that he did not commence the CHRIST till he had been baptiſed in the Jordan.

As ſome were afraid of deſtroying the unity by the trinity, others were afraid of deſtroying the trinity by the unity. ARIUS thought to ſave both by oppoſing the Unitarians, who took away all diſtinction of perſons, and the Trinitarians, who held that they were all equal. He made the diſtinction of perſons as ſtrong as he could, in contradiction to the former; and he was ſo far from acceding to the latter, that he denied the Son to be either in rank or nature equal to the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt to be ſo even to the Son. The ſtrict Trinitarians, who became afterwards the ſole orthodox, might hold the Father to be alone eternal in this ſenſe, "quod careat origine;" for "duæ perſonæ ab ipſo ſunt, ipſe a nullo." So HILARIUS expreſſed himſelf. But he and the reſt of them believed an eternal generation of the Son, and proceſſion of the Holy Spirit, who had no beginning in time, tho they had an original in nature,

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the nature of the Father. The Arians, on the other hand, denied this community of nature, held the Father alone to be the Supreme God, and the Son to be the firſt of all creatures, but a created being. If this doctrine had become orthodox, as it did very nearly, notwithſtanding the deciſion of the nicean council, the Macedonians would have formed no ſect. The divinity of the ſecond hypoſtaſis failing, that of the third would have fallen of courſe; which it is plain that ARIUS ſaw, when he urged nothing, and the nicean council added nothing to the creed concerning the Holy Ghoſt. But the heretics of thoſe days were ſo afraid of admitting any co-equality with the Supreme Being, that they oppoſed the divinity of the third hypoſtaſis, even after that of the ſecond had been eſtabliſhed. They were eaſily defeated. The ſame ſort of proof as had ſerved in one diſpute ſerved in the other: and tho the orthodox themſelves diſtinguiſhed generation from proceſſion, yet the ſcripture joining the Son and the Holy Ghoſt ſo often together, and CHRIST having ordered baptiſm to be adminiſtered in the name of the Holy Ghoſt, as well as of the Father and the Son, the divinity of the Holy Ghoſt was confirmed; and theſe councils employed, very wiſely, authority inſtead of argument. It was impoſſible, indeed, to ſhew, by any ſubtilty of logic, that this doctrine was not polytheiſtical; ſince the admiſſion of three, or of three hundred gods, is equally ſo. There remained, therefore, nothing to be done, but to make a myſtery where they found none; and,

and, having decreed that there are three gods, to decree at the ſame time that there is but one: for ſo the athanaſian doctrine muſt ſound to every man who does not comprehend, and that is every man living, all the profound metaphyſies that have been employed to diſtinguiſh away the apparent contradiction, unleſs he give his underſtanding up to a jargon of words, and can fancy he believes without any clear and diſtinct ideas.

In this manner was the fundamental article of chriſtianity impoſed at firſt, without a plain and harmonical concurrence of the ſcriptures, or of tradition; tho ſuch a concurrence, at leaſt, was neceſſary to make it a revealed doctrine, and of divine obligation. It continues to be impoſed ſtill: and there is but too much reaſon to apprehend that theſe theological attempts, to perſuade mankind that three diſtinct perſons in the godhead make but one God, have induced ſome to believe that there is no God at all: juſt as the pretenſions of heathen philoſophers to knowledge really unattainable, induced ſeveral to aſſert that there is no knowledge at all. If I was to write the hiſtory of arianiſm, it would be a part of my ſubject to ſhew, with how much difficulty the orthodox doctrine prevailed againſt it; how it revived often even under Constantine, much more under ſome of his ſucceſſors; and was, at laſt, drowned in the blood of thoſe who profeſſed it. The Athanaſians and the Arians were, in ſome reſpects, like the Praſini and the Veneti. The principal difference between

between the firſt was in the words they uſed, and between the laſt in the colors they wore. Neither the divines, nor the chariot-drivers, were left to contend by themſelves in the ſchools, and in the circus. Men, women, children, all the world, took part on one ſide or the other. The ſtate was diſordered by the circenſian, and the church and the ſtate both by the ſynodical conteſts. The civil power, which ſhould have put both down, kept both up: and magiſtrates were as partial in one caſe, and as bigot in the other, as the vulgar. It were to be wiſhed that the compariſon would hold in one circumſtance more; for, in the reign of JUSTINIAN, the Praſini and the Veneti were both aboliſhed.

SECTION XXX.

THE accounts we have of ATHANASIUS and of ARIUS are come to us in the writings of the former, and of thoſe of the ſame party, and, therefore, may be deemed extremely partial, as they are extremely violent: and yet very little ſagacity is neceſſary to diſcover, even in them, that the ſaint had leſs moderation, and not leſs ambition, than the heretic; that he had the ſpirit of intrigue as much as EUSEBIUS of Nicomedia; and that he was one of thoſe churchmen, whom pride and obſtinacy of temper, under the name of zeal, render equally fit to perſecute, and to bear perſecution. The authority of the perſons, who were at the head of this diſpute, deſerves, in a word, no conſideration.

deration. But as the athanaſian doctrine was confirmed by the firſt and all other councils, except a very few, it may be proper to enquire what regard theſe councils deſerve. Now as to that, we may ſay boldly, becauſe we can prove invincibly, that they deſerve none; whether we judge of them analogouſly to thoſe that have been held in our time, or near it, or whether we judge of theſe primitive councils by what we know of them from cotemporary, and the moſt orthodox authority.

THE firſt attempt to ſilence ARIUS, and to condemn his doctrine, was in a provincial council held at Alexandria. The letters OSIUS carried thither from CONSTANTINE ſeemed calculated rather to compoſe and reconcile, than to animate and condemn. This was certainly the aim of EUSEBIUS of Nicomedia in whom CONSTANTINE had much confidence, that of the emperor himſelf, and not improbably that of OSIUS too. This council had not been unanimous in their ſubſcriptions, and nothing had been formally decided againſt ARIUS in it. But yet I think that the terms, which made ſo much noiſe in the nicean council afterwards, were employed in this; the terms I mean of one nature or ſubſtance, and three perſons or ſubſiſtencies: for it was grown to be a point of honor among moſt of the prelates and great men of the church, not to ſuffer that the founder of their religion ſhould paſs for any thing leſs than a God, even the Supreme God. This circumſtance might encourage ALEXANDER, the biſhop of Alexandria,

or

or rather his prompter ATHANASIUS; and ARIUS might think it a victory not to be ſoon defeated. He might think that if his doctrine could ſtand the firſt brunt of oppoſition, it had as fair a chance of becoming orthodox as the other. Thus the diſpute continued, and the diſorders occaſioned by it at Alexandria, where it was carried on with open violence. It ſpread; it gained the court. The influence of the clergy on private conſcience, and the influence of private conſcience on public tranquillity, began to ſhew themſelves in a dangerous manner. CONSTANTINE ſaw, and apprehended the conſequences. To prevent them, he reſolved to call together a general council, and to preſide in it; for ſo in effect he did. He flattered himſelf that an eccleſiaſtical diſpute would be beſt determined in an eccleſiaſtical aſſembly; and that a parcel of wrangling prieſts would be ſilenced by a ſynod repreſentative of their whole order. He reſolved to ſupport their decrees, whatever they ſhould be; about which it is plain enough, both by the language and the conduct he held, that he was much leſs ſolicitous, than he was to have any deciſion that might put an end to the diſpute: for which purpoſe there is room to ſuſpect that he took, among others, one method, rather political than fair. I ſay, that there is room to ſuſpect this. I dare ſay no more in oppoſition to that profuſion of learning, which has been employed to defend the firſt nicean council, and to prove the doctrine of the trinity, that was ſettled in it, to be an ecumenical deciſion. Mr. SELDEN publiſhed

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in latin, from an arabian manuſcript, the Antiquities of the church of Alexandria, written by EUTYCHIUS, a famous patriarch of that church in the ninth or tenth century. Now this author having given a liſt of theſe patriarchs, from HANARIAS a cobler, who was the firſt of them, down to ALEXANDER, who was the eighteenth, relates that CONSTANTINE ſummoned a council at Nicæa to determine the diſpute between this patriarch and ARIUS. The council conſiſted, he ſays, of two thouſand and forty eight, whereof three hundred and eighteen were unanimous in declaring the divinity of CHRIST. The reſt were divided by a great number of different opinions, ſententiarum diſcrimine multiplici; they could not agree among themſelves, but they all oppoſed the three hundred and eighteen. SELDEN produces two authorities more, to confirm that of EUTYCHIUS: the authority of JOSEPH, an egyptian preſbyter, in his preface to a verſion of the councils into arabic from antient chriſtian monuments; and that of ISMAEL IBN ALI, a mahometan hiſtorian of reputation. They ſpeak to the ſame effect: and, by the concurrent teſtimony of all three, the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was not that of the whole council, nor of a majority of the fathers. It ſeems to have been rather a profeſſion of faith drawn up by the biſhop of Jeruſalem for the emperor, "quam "deſcripſerat ei epiſc. Hieroſolymit." the emperor had it read in the ſynod: three hundred and eighteen approved it out of the whole number: theſe were unanimous, the reſt could agree in nothing,

"nec

" nec inter ſe concordes, nec in fide ſua." It was neceſſary to the deſign of CONSTANTINE, therefore, that the deciſion of a party in the council ſhould paſs for an oecumenical deciſion. On the whole, there is room for the ſuſpicion I have mentioned; for if it ſhould be objected, that theſe teſtimonies were given ſome centuries after the events happened, the ſame objection may be made to the moſt approved of greek and roman, jewiſh and chriſtian, eccleſiaſtical and civil, ſacred and profane antiquities, as Mr. SELDEN obſerves. EUTYCHIUS and JOSEPH were learned antiquaries, they were both orthodox. They wanted no materials, and their biaſs was ſtrongly in favor of the nicean council. EUTYCHIUS declares his approbation of the doctrine, and JOSEPH compares the three hundred and eighteen to the angels for their excellency, and to the ſtars for their ſplendor. The prejudices of theſe men were in favor of the doctrine and council, to both of which the mahometan hiſtorian muſt have been very indifferent: and, in this particular reſpect, his teſtimony may be deemed more credible than that either of ATHANASIUS, or of ARIUS, would be *.

* N. B. Since I have mentioned mahometan teſtimonies concerning the eſtabliſhment of the trinitarian doctrine, may I not be allowed to obſerve, that this doctrine gives the Mahometans as much reaſon to ſay that the revelation which MAHOMET publiſhed was neceſſary to eſtabliſh the unity of the Supreme Being, in oppoſition to the polytheiſm which chriſtianity had introduced, as Chriſtians have to inſiſt that the revelation which CHRIST publiſhed a few centuries before, was neceſſary to eſtabliſh the unity of the godhead againſt pagan polytheiſm?

If Constantine flattered himſelf that this expedient would impoſe an uniform belief, the event ſhewed that he was much deceived. Such diſputes are in their nature not determinable, and all attempts to determine them by dogmatical deciſions are palliative remedies, of as bad conſequence as no deciſion at all, and of worſe when a ſubmiſſion to them is exacted by fraud, or force and violence. He was not yet acquainted with the pertinacious ſpirit of the clergy, who never give up a point which ambition or intereſt, enthuſiaſm or humor has made any of them advance; tho the peace of mankind and the lives of millions be at ſtake, in a quarrel that concerns neither natural religion nor even the eſſentials of revealed religion. Experience ſoon informed him better; for tho arianiſm was condemned, and the reverend fathers racked their brains to find out words that might eſtabliſh not a ſimilitude of the Son to the Father, but a ſameneſs and conſubſtantiality with him, nay tho the chiefs of the ſect ſeemed to ſubmit to the authority of the council, like the biſhops of Nicomedia and Caeſarea, yet the Arians were Arians ſtill. They ſeemed to ſubmit to it; but in truth they ſubmitted to that of the emperor, who would have a deciſion at any rate. The council made no converts. He made ſome hypocrites, who anſwered his purpoſe enough, by playing with words ſo dexterouſly as to adopt athanaſian terms and retain arian opinions.

How

How ſhould the authority of this council have any weight with thoſe who thought like ARIUS, when it had none with thoſe who thought like ATHANASIUS? And it had none even with the very beſt of theſe. Notwithſtanding the zeal of St. GREGORY of Nazianzum for the nicean doctrine, it is evident that it had none with him. He maintained his opinions as independently of this council, to which they were conformable, as ARIUS could maintain his, that ſtood in direct oppoſition to it. How elſe can we account for what he ſays in a letter to PROCOPIUS? "I am determined," ſays the ſaint ſpeaking of councils, "to avoid all ſuch "aſſemblies for the future." He declares that he "had not ſeen any council whoſe concluſion "had been happy, or who had done more to "cure than to increaſe and aggravate evils." He ſpeaks in other places to the ſame effect. But what he ſays in his book about biſhops, to whoſe characters he was much leſs favourable, tho he was a biſhop, than St. JEROM was to their order; and what he ſays in ſome of his orations or ſermons, particularly in his farewell ſermon when he quitted his biſhopric and retired to his ſolitude, go to the bottom of this matter, and ſhew how impoſſible it was that a council could be aſſembled in this famous fourth century, when ſo many important articles of faith were ſettled, that deſerved any more regard than that of Trent. Men were raiſed to the epiſcopal dignity too eaſily, he ſays, without regard to their morals, and without any other merit than a great deſire to be biſhops. The ig-

norance of theſe, however, was the leaſt evil; for there were others who became the ludibria maygames of life, indifferent about the faith, and ready to take any ſide; followers of the modes and cuſtoms of the times, not of the laws of God; lions to their inferiors, but fawning dogs to the great. He continues. When they have nothing elſe to boaſt, they boaſt of their very iniquity. This is that myſtery of iniquity, which has overſpread almoſt the whole world. He deſcribes ſome of theſe paſtors of the church indulging themſelves in all the effeminate luxury of the age, and patrons of their own vices in the vices of others, giving others leave to ſin that they might ſin with greater licence themſelves. He paints, in a ſort of contraſt with theſe, ſome who put off their braſs for gold, who wore long beards, ſolemn countenances, and modeſt habits; whoſe heads were reclined, their walk and geſture as compoſed, as their mien and their voice ſoft and gentle, vocem pertenuem. They affected wiſdom in all their outward air, but they had none in their minds, where it ſhould principally reſide. He compares the noiſe and confuſion of their aſſemblies to thoſe of the circus and the theater. He complains that they were iniquitous and abſurd judges of things; iniqui et abſurdi rerum judices. That names directed their hatred and their friendſhip; and that they did not bluſh to contradict themſelves before the ſame auditory. In ſhort, he congratulates himſelf that he ſhould ſit no longer among thoſe cranes and geeſe. He leaves them to their thrones and tyranny.

ranny. He bids them be inſolent by themſelves. He bids them adieu. Valete, pergite. Ego me ad Deum convertam, ſays the ſaint.

I MIGHT collect many more anecdotes like theſe from the writings of St. GREGORY, and might ſtrengthen them too by other very orthodox authorities both before and after his time: by that of St. CYPRIAN, for inſtance, who wrote about a century before, as high an opinion as he entertained and propagated of biſhops and of the whole eccleſiaſtical order; and by that of SULPITIUS SEVERUS, who wrote about a century after his time. I will quote the laſt particularly, becauſe it occurs to my memory as I am writing, and is very ſhort. SULPITIUS SEVERUS, a zealous Chriſtian of the fifth century, ſays, that in his time the beſt of the clergy *, thoſe who did not addict themſelves to trade

* THO I have not quoted St. CYPRIAN as particularly, as I have quoted St. GREGORY of Nazianzum, in the text, it may be proper to do ſo in this note, that you may ſee the character of the Chriſtians, and even of the martyrs or confeſſors of the third century, as fully, as you have ſeen that of the biſhops and councils of the fourth century. St. CYPRIAN then ſpeaks to this purpoſe in his book De lapſis: that the Chriſtians of his age were given up to inſatiable avarice; that the clergy were unſound in the faith, and licentious in their manners; that the men were effeminate, and diſgraced their beards; that the women were coquet and lewd: for he accuſes them here of proſtituting their members [a], that is, the members of CHRIST, to the Gentiles; and, ſomewhere elſe, of lying with the Chriſtian prieſts [b]. He ſays, that not only

a Proſtituêre gentilibus membra CHRISTI——

b Cum viris, iiſque clericis, concumbentium.

trade and usury, nor live in fine houses, nor attend to the improvement of their great estates, did

rash swearing, but perjury, insolent contempt of their superiors, poisonous malice, and obstinate hatred prevailed among the generality of Christians. He says, in particular, that many bishops, despising their holy function, were taken up with secular affairs; that they deserted their flocks, wandered into the provinces of others, traded, exercised usury, got fraudulently into the possession of estates to which they had no right, grew rich, and left the poor to starve. Such was the purity of an age famous for martyrs and confessors, and at the same time for greatest dissolution of manners. Nay, even confessors themselves fell into the same dissolution, and were guilty of the most abominable crimes, "fraudes, stupra, et adulteria," as the saint assures us in his famous and favorite book, De unitate ecclesiae. He adds, that injustice, insolence, and perfidy might be learned of these confessors, and he cautions Christians against following their examples, "nemo—de "confessoris moribus disceat." Such was the clerical order; such were those martyrs or confessors, who obtained by their sufferings the greatest fame and authority in the church, at a time when many articles of faith were determined, and many more were on the point of being determined in the next century. As little credit as CYPRIAN may deserve in other cases, he deserves much in this; for he advances nothing improbable, nothing which must not have been of public notoriety when he wrote. It may seem strange indeed that so great a stickler as he was, for episcopal dignity and authority, and for the pre-eminence of the religious over the civil society, should transmit such a character of them to posterity. But this may be accounted for, perhaps, by assuming, for I grow very apt to assume, by conversing so much with ecclesiastical writers, who assume much oftener than they prove, that the saint applied to every bishop especially, and even to every priest, what modern divines applied to the pope, when they maintained, in the case of JULIUS the second, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, that no vices whatever could degrade this dignity, nor lessen this authority, unless there was a suspicion of heresy [c].

[c] Vid. GUICCIARDIN, at the end of his ninth book.

something

ſomething worſe; that they waited for preſents which were made to them, and diſgraced the dignity of their miniſtry by a venal ſanctity, and by the price they ſet on the exerciſe of it. Theſe complaints were not arrows ſhot in the dark. All of them were publiſhed at the time. Some of the keeneſt were ſo in a ſermon preached, before the whole court and people of Conſtantinople, in the church of Sancta Sophia. They are more than ſufficient, therefore, to take away all that reſpect for councils, even for the nicean, which has been ſounded ſo high by divines in all ages from the fourth downwards. They may ſerve likewiſe to take off our wonder at all the revolutions to which the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was expoſed in an age when councils contradicted councils; when four or five hundred fathers of the church, for I think there were ſo many at Rimini, to ſay nothing of the council of Seleucia and others, could prevaricate about a doctrine ſo lately eſtabliſhed; and when arianiſm could revive in this ſhort ſpace of time ſo much as to make one orthodox doctor * complain that, except a few, who were of his party you may be ſure, all the reſt of the ten provinces of Aſia had not the true knowledge of God; and another †, that the world was ſurpriſed to find itſelf arian, "miratus eſt orbis ſe eſſe arianum;" in ſhort, when not only a great number of the gens linigera, the ſurplice-wearing crowd, but LIBERIUS the biſhop of Rome, and that great column of orthodoxy, OSIUS, became fautors of the Arians.

* St. HILARY. † St. JEROM.

THE truth is, that whether laymen came into theſe ſynods or not, as St. GREGORY of Nazianzum complains bitterly that they did, the ſpirit of the court was the ſpirit that directed the determinations of councils. A ſucceſſion of princes like VALENS would have made the whole roman empire arian. A ſucceſſion of princes like JULIAN might have made it pagan again. But a ſucceſſion of princes like THEOPOSIUS, like him at leaſt in his religious character, baniſhed arianiſm to the Goths, among whom it was at laſt extinguiſhed by RECAREDUS in Spain, tho not by means as gentle as MARIANA would inſinuate. If chriſtianity was not propagated, as the religion of MAHOMET was, yet is it true to ſay that the ſyſtem of chriſtian theology, which has paſſed for the chriſtian religion ever ſince, and has done ſo much hurt under that notion, was eſtabliſhed by the ſword, and by every kind of perſecution.

THE orthodox opinion concerning the divinity of JESUS had two advantages over the other, which could not, as I think they did not, fail to produce great effects on all thoſe who were zealouſly affected to chriſtianity, or who deſired, for any reaſon religious or political, to maintain the fervor of others. The firſt of theſe advantages was this. The orthodox belief gave a greater luſtre to chriſtianity. If the other came more nearly to the truth, and contradicted human reaſon leſs, yet this held out more of the marvellous; and the marvellous

vellous in matters of religion, that is preſumed to be revealed, will impoſe and affect more than truth and reaſon. This was an advantage which the ableſt of the fathers ſaw and improved: and therefore ſome of them always maintained it with a zeal, which would have been called heretical obſtinacy, if they had not happened to be declared orthodox at laſt, againſt thoſe who were willing to ſoften certain terms for the ſake of peace and union: and they preferred to both theſe the keeping it intire. They ſucceeded. They took every other advantage that the courſe of events offered, or intrigue could procure; they improved them all by this, and they tranſmitted to poſterity the orthodox doctrine after many ſtruggles.

EVERY able man ſaw and improved this advantage; but the other was of a nature to make itſelf felt by every man who embraced chriſtianity, for it proceeded from the pride of the human heart. That the Supreme Being ſhould ſend an inferior being, who was for that reaſon called his Son, to redeem mankind and to give them a more perfect law, might be thought ſufficient to ſatisfy divine juſtice, that required, according to them, a victim to be offered up; and even an honor more than ſufficient done to creatures whom he had placed in the loweſt rank of intelligent beings and moral agents. But that he ſhould ſend his Son, who was conſubſtantial with himſelf, in glory equal, in majeſty co-eternal, to fulfill ſuch purpoſes as theſe, might be thought ſuch a mark of

favor

favor and predilection as raiſed the ſons of men to a much higher rank in the ſcale of being. Agreeably to this notion, we find that the angel in the apocalypſe would not ſuffer St. John to adore him, but declared himſelf a fellow-ſervant to the evangeliſt, and to all thoſe who had the teſtimony of Jesus *. This reſpect was not ſhewn even to Abraham, or Daniel, before the incarnation of Christ and the redemption of man, which is a myſtery that the angels acknowledge and reverence †. They acknowledge it, and by that they acknowledge the dignity of the human nature. Thus far Erasmus § carries the obſervation. But a right reverend archbiſhop ‖ of our church carries it much farther, at the cloſe of one of his ſermons, where he obſerves very pathetically, that when the angels fell, God left them in their fallen ſtate; but when man fell, he ſent his ſon, his only begotten, his dearly beloved ſon, to redeem the race by his ſufferings and paſſion. One of theſe divines raiſes us to an equality with the angels, the other to a ſuperiority over them.

There are a multitude of other inſtances, ready to be brought, wherein fathers of the church and councils have impoſed their own imaginations, and, perhaps, their miſtakes, for revealed doc-

* Vide ne feceris, conſervus tuus ſum, et fratrum tuorum habentium teſtimonium Jesu. Apoc. c. xix.

† —In quem deſiderant angeli proſpicere. St. Pet. 1 ep. c. i.

§ Catechef. 6. ‖ Tillotson.

trines

trines and divine truths, curſing and perſecuting all thoſe who diſſented from them. Theſe inſtances do not fall within the bounds I have ſet to myſelf. One of them however, ſhall be juſt mentioned, becauſe it has been the ſubject of much controverſy, and the cauſe of much diſorder in many countries, and is ſo at this time in France. Our countryman PELAGIUS appeared in the beginning of the fifth century. He was called the britannic ſerpent. His firſt antagoniſt was the ſurly, foul-mouthed controverſiſt JEROM: his greateſt was AUSTIN. He was condemned by councils, and excommunicated by popes. But he was a great genius, a great divine, and a great philoſopher; and if he was too much a ſtoician in his theology, he might have reproached thoſe who oppoſed him, St. AUSTIN particularly, for mingling too much platoniſm in theirs. The principal objection to his doctrine was, that he aſcribed too much to freewill, and nothing to grace. But it may be, that if he magnified too highly the ſufficiency of one, he extenuated, rather than rejected, the uſe and efficacy of the other. The Semipelagians at leaſt, who diſſented from the african biſhop about predeſtination and grace, avoided the extreme into which PELAGIUS was underſtood to go, and maintained a neceſſary concurrence of freewill and grace; by which they avoided the abſurd circular reaſoning of thoſe who make faith neceſſary to obtain grace, and grace neceſſary to produce faith. Man was to co-operate with God in their theology, and ſalvation was open to all who

who did ſo. This doctrine appears moderate, reaſonable, and no way repugnant to the ideas of divine juſtice and goodneſs; whereas that of an abſolute predeſtination, of election and reprobation, is ſcandalouſly ſo. A Jew accuſtomed to believe that God had choſen one nation to be his peculiarly, and excluſively of all others, might fall eaſily into an opinion, that a divine partiality for particular men had ſucceeded and taken the place of a divine partiality for a particular nation. But it has been, and it muſt be always very impolitic in divines to fix ſuch blaſphemy on the great maſter of their artificial theology, if St. Paul may be underſtood naturally and coherently in another ſenſe. The apoſtle meant, as Locke † explains his meaning not very naturally perhaps, nor coherently, to aſſert the right which God has over all the nations of the earth, to raiſe and to favor one, to depreſs and reject another, according to his good pleaſure and the impenetrable ſecrets of his providence. The Jews were rejected nationally, becauſe they refuſed nationally to receive the Meſſiah. But thoſe of them who received him were not included in this rejection. He had choſen them nationally, by virtue of his ſovereignty: by virtue of the ſame, he had rejected them nationally likewiſe. But of perſonal election or rejection among thoſe who embraced chriſtianity, and ſo became the people of God inſtead of the Jews, the apoſtle had no intention to ſpeak; if this expoſitor gueſſes well. Thus in-

† Vid. Locke in his Paraph. and notes 7.

deed

deed we muſt underſtand St. PAUL, to reconcile his doctrine a little to common ſenſe *, to common equity, and to ſuch notions of the divine perfections as it would be much more impious to diſbelieve, than to diſbelieve him. But St. AUSTIN thought fit to underſtand him otherwiſe, and to believe the apoſtle according to his own interpretation of ſome paſſages, in defiance of common ſenſe, common equity, and true theiſm. St. AUSTIN, whom other fathers and councils have followed, St. LUTHER, St. CALVIN, and St. JANSENIUS, have ſuppoſed a myſtery where there is none, except in the ſtyle of a writer the leaſt preciſe and clear that ever writ; and under pretence of explaining this myſtery they have blaſphemed, as St. PAUL himſelf did, if his ſenſe was

* I SAY a little; becauſe it may be obſerved, that when Mr. LOCKE aſſerts, on this occaſion, that God proceeds to favor or reject nations arbitrarily, and by the right of his ſovereignty alone, without any regard to their moral character, he proſtitutes ſtill in ſome degree, that of God himſelf, and ſacrifices a great deal too much to his reſpect for St. PAUL. In order to ſoften the abſurdity of the apoſtle, who meant, as it appears plainly enough by the context, notwithſtanding this ingenious device, juſt what CALVIN ſuppoſed him to mean, he deſtroys the great ſanction of natural law, by which the virtues of ſocieties tend neceſſarily to their proſperity, and the vices to their miſery. Surely this doctrine of abſolute prediſtination, and that of unlimited paſſive obedience, are doctrines of the utmoſt abſurdity, tho taught by this apoſtle; with this difference however, that one teaches us to ſubmit to the arbitrary will of man, and the other, that God proceeds in his government, as human tyrants do, by arbitrary will. One is abſurd: the other both abſurd and impious.

theirs.

theirs. They have made a god, ſuch as no one, who knows what he ſays when he ſays he believes a god, can acknowledge: and they impute to him, what they who believe a devil might impute with great propriety to that wicked ſpirit. This ſtrange and impious doctrine has been tranſmitted to us from the fifth century, and tho diſputed by ſome, is held in general to be orthodox. They who agree in little elſe, agree in this. Janſeniſts, Lutherans, Calviniſts, and I am ſorry to ſay that the divines of our church, who are better theiſts than to adopt ſo abominable a doctrine, are obliged to ſwear that they do, when they ſubſcribe the thirty nine articles. Whether St. PAUL intended to teach it is made to ſome perſons, but I confeſs not to my ſelf, doubtful; that St. AUSTIN did, and that CHRIST did not, teach it, is certain: and yet this doctrine is one of thoſe which theology has impoſed for a chriſtian doctrine, and by which the peace of the world has been diſturbed in every age of the church. The truth is, that the church has been in every age an hydra, ſuch a monſter as the poets feign with many heads. All theſe heads hiſſed and barked and tore one another with fury. As faſt as ſome were cut off, others ſprouted out, and all the art and all the violence employed to create an apparent, could never create a real uniformity. The ſcene of chriſtianity has been always a ſcene of diſſenſion, of hatred, of perſecution, and of blood.

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SECTION XXXI.

THIS the atheiſts object, and Chriſtians cannot deny. It is neceſſary therefore, in order to juſtify the chriſtian religion from this reproach, that we proceed to ſhew, by inſtances ſtill ſtronger and more modern than thoſe that have been already produced, how theſe diſturbances, far from being the natural effects of religion, have proceeded ſolely from the conſtitution of the chriſtian church, by which the peace of the world was laid, in the firſt ages of chriſtianity, and ſtill lies, at the mercy of an order of men, who indulge their paſſions, and find their account ſeveral ways in diſturbing it. We have proved, by undeniable evidence, that the whole body of the clergy, ſome few good and learned but not infallible men excepted, was ignorant, contentious, and profligate; and that councils were riotous aſſemblies, governed by intrigue, and celebrated with noiſe, confuſion, and the greateſt indecency. This was the ſtate of the church in the fourth century: and it did not grow better, if it could not grow worſe, afterwards. On the contrary, as learning and knowledge decreaſed in the latter empire, the impoſitions of eccleſiaſtical authority grew up to ſuch an height, and were ſo confirmed in the courſe of nine centuries at leaſt, that when learning revived, tho they were detected, they could not be exploded. A chriſtian church, for I uſe the word here in the improper but common acceptation

ceptation of it, having been eſtabliſhed in the empire by CONSTANTINE, as well as the chriſtian religion, and both of them being ſuppoſed to have the ſame divine original, the power and diſcipline of one became as independent of the civil authority, as the doctrines of the other. According to this ſyſtem, the clergy did not compoſe, in the empire nor out of it, wherever they were admitted, an order belonging to the ſtate that admitted them; nor incorporated with it as a member of the ſame body, independent on it as a ſubject. But they compoſed, more properly, an order diſtinct from it, the member of another body, the ſubject of another ſtate. Churchmen were buſy and troubleſome inmates in every family where they were received. They lived at the expence of it, they acquired government in it, and they had often an intereſt contrary to it. This was the caſe whilſt the empire continued entire. The authority of the empire extended itſelf over many provinces and different ſtates. So did that of the church. Even the conquerors of one were conquered by the other. Thus it happened in the weſt, if not in the eaſt, and the Goths chriſtianiſed, if the Saracens did not. When the empire was broken to pieces, the church remained entire; and the ſame eccleſiaſtical authority and diſcipline ſubſiſted, where the ſame imperial authority and government were no longer acknowledged.

BUT it is neceſſary I ſhould ſhew you, in ſome particulars, the truth of what is advanced in general.

neral. Whilſt the Chriſtians were a ſect in the empire, they had private judicatures of their own; and they avoided the pagan tribunals, not only becauſe they might think that it was below the dignity of ſaints to ſubmit to be tried by them, but chiefly becauſe it was prudent to conceal from unbelievers that Chriſtians went to law with Chriſtians, and that, notwithſtanding the ſanctity of their profeſſion, the greateſt crimes, even that of inceſt, were practiſed among them. That theſe were their reaſons, is plain from what St. PAUL writes to the Corinthians in the fifth and ſixth chapters of his firſt epiſtle. Tho abſent in body, yet preſent with them in ſpirit, he judges the inceſtuous man, and delivers him over to Satan. Neither he, nor they, had any right to judge thoſe who were out of the church. But they had a right to judge thoſe who were in it, or they pretended to have it. Inceſt might have been puniſhed by a pagan judge. But the inceſt of a Chriſtian was to be puniſhed by Chriſtians, as far as they could puniſh by excommunicating and delivering over to the devil, but even thus in order to the ſalvation of the criminal; that the ſpirit may be ſaved in the day of our Lord JESUS, tho the fleſh be deſtroyed. St. PAUL aſks, "Dare "any of you, having a matter againſt another, "go to law before the unjuſt, that is, the hea-"thens, and not before the ſaints, that is, your "fellow Chriſtians? Do you not know that the "ſaints ſhall judge the world? Know you not "that we ſhall judge angels?" After which, the

apoſtle directs ſuch as have any controverſy together to take the meaneſt and moſt contemptible Chriſtian for their judge, rather than to go to the tribunals of the impious. I underſtand the paſſage, as ERASMUS explains it, more agreeably to the drift of this whole argumentation, than others. St. AUSTIN, he ſays, gave it the ſame ſenſe; but I wonder this judicious critic did not obſerve how abſurdly the ſaint reaſoned, when he thought he was obliged, by this paſſage, to take upon himſelf the judgment of cauſes, becauſe he was a biſhop *. The reaſoning of St. PAUL, however excellent in his time, could not be applicable in that of St. AUSTIN. The empire was then become Chriſtian. The ſaints were judged by ſaints in the public tribunals; and the apprehenſion of giving ſcandal to the heathen was a vain pretence, on many accounts.

THE truth is, that there was in thoſe days, what has been ſeen very often ſince among the clergy, a ſort of holy ambition, which proved as ſtrong a motive in the hearts of good men tranſported by a miſtaken zeal for the church, whoſe cauſe they confounded with the cauſe of religion, as that profane ambition, which mean nothing more than to advance, under pious pretences, the grandeur, wealth, and dominion of the religious over the civil ſociety, was in the hearts of hypo-

* Divus AUGUSTINUS, in libro De opere monachorum, ait ſeſe ex hôc PAULI loco cogi ad ſuſcipienda judicia cauſarum, quum eſſet epiſcopus.

crites

crites and knaves. Innumerable ſuch examples charity will incline us to believe that there have been; and without going farther than our own country and the laſt age, ſuch LAUD ſeems to me to have been, an ambitious, tyrannical prieſt, but a pious man.

THESE two ſorts of ambition helped one another mutually. Neither of them could have done ſo well alone; but both concurring, from very different motives, they ſoon eſtabliſhed a church as independent on the ſtate, as conjunctures well improved, and the characters of princes well managed, could make it. The emperors were moſtly favourable to them, for one of theſe two reaſons, and ſometimes for both. As far as bigotry prevailed, they looked on the conſtitution of the church to be of the ſame divine original as the doctrines of it. They received the former on the faith of thoſe from whom they received the latter. They had as good authority for one as for the other; and, however the clergy might differ about points of doctrine, and ſome of diſcipline, the whole order agreed to inculcate the ſame reſpect for the hierarchy, or the holy principality, that is, for their own order. CHRIST had eſtabliſhed his church on the model of the jewiſh. The near correſpondence of eccleſiaſtical polity, under both diſpenſations, ſhewed a ſameneſs of original; and the near correſpondence of the terreſtrial hierarchy with that which had been imagined in heaven, proved that it was divine. All this was ſhewiſh. It paſſes now. It might well

paſs then. But yet, I think, there was another reaſon for favoring the church, which the emperors felt more ſenſibly.

THE notion of a formal alliance between the church and the ſtate, as between two independent diſtinct powers, is a very groundleſs and whimſical notion *. But a fraudulent or ſilent compact between

* I HAVE head of a ſermon preached by one doctor SENIOR, a fellow of Trinity college in Cambridge before king CHARLES the ſecond at Newmarket, in the days of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance, and afterwards printed. His text was taken from the 14, 15, and 16th verſes of the 4th chapter of Exodus, or ſome of them, wherein God directs MOSES to take AARON, the levite, becauſe he knew that AARON could ſpeak well to the people, and joins them together in commiſſion, that they might aſſiſt one another mutually; that AARON might be inſtead of a mouth to MOSES, and that MOSES might be inſtead of God to AARON. What other applications the good doctor made of theſe texts I know not. But I am informed by one †, who has read the ſermon, that he eſtabliſhed on them a ſuppoſed alliance between the church and the ſtate: or rather between the church and the king. By this alliance, the well-ſpoken levite was to inſtill paſſive obedience to the king into the minds of the people, and to inſiſt on it, as on a law of God. The king, on the other hand, was to be the nurſing father of the church, to ſupport her authority, to preſerve at leaſt, if not increaſe, her immunities, and to keep her in the full poſſeſſion of all the advantages ſhe claimed. The church performed her part, and had a right, by virtue of this alliance, if the king did not perform his, to teach this doctrine no longer, and to reſume her independency on the ſtate and on him. This was the purport of the ſermon at leaſt: and WARBURTON took his hint, poſſibly, from it, and turned it to ſerve his purpoſe, that is, to lay down the ſame principles, and to banter mankind, if he could, by not drawing directly and

† Mr. LEWIS, who was himſelf of Trinity college.

avowedly

between princes and prieſts became very real, as ſoon as an eccleſiaſtical order was eſtabliſhed. The emperors admitted and reverenced, or appeared to reverence, the divine right of the clergy. The clergy, in return, made uſe of their influence over conſciences to eſtabliſh an opinion of a divine right in them. They were no longer deified after death, as they had been whilſt the empire was pagan; but they were made ſacred during their lives: and as biſhops ordained one another and their ſubordinate prieſts by the impoſition of hands, ſo they ordained emperors and kings by crowning them, and by anointing them with holy oil, which angels were ſometimes employed to bring down from heaven. As they

avowedly from them the ſame concluſions. Doctor SENIOR's authority is, no doubt, as good in this caſe, as that of DE MARCA, or even of BOSSUET. The firſt, a time-ſerving [b] prieſt, intereſted, and a great flatterer, if ever there was one, and who made no ſcruple to explain away whatever he had found himſelf obliged to ſay in favor of the ſtate. The latter was as wiſe, if not as cunning, as learned, and a much better man, tho not ſo much in the favor of Mr. WARBURTON, who gave them characters, in his aſſuming ſtyle, without knowing any thing of them, and who has the impertinence to pronounce of the greateſt ſcholar, the greateſt divine, and the greateſt orator of his age, that he was [c] a good ſenſible man. He was all I have ſaid of him: but he was an eccleſiaſtic, and a ſubject of France.

[b] When DE MARCA was made biſhop of Conſerans, and could not get his bulls diſpatched, he explained away all he ſaid to limit the papal power. He ſent this book to INNOCENT the Xth, with a letter, whereby he retracted many things he had ſaid, aſked pardon for his errors, and promiſed for the future to ſupport, with all his force, the prerogatives of the church of Rome. After this he writ De ſingulari primatu PETRI, to flatter the ſame pope.

Vid. the laſt edition of the Alliance between church and ſtate demonſtrated.

made their own office, ſo they made that of emperors and kings, independent of human inſtitution, and the divine appointment was ſignified, or rather conveyed, in both caſes by their miniſtry. By this alliance of the hierarchy and the monarchy, religion, that ſhould ſupport good government alone, was employed to ſupport good or bad government alike, as it had been by St. PAUL: and the worſt of men, and the greateſt uſurpers and tyrants, were not only paſſively obeyed, but ſerved and courted, by the moſt eminent ſaints of the church, when no eccleſiaſtical intereſt prevailed to alter their conduct; for then the moſt fulſome panegyriſts became the moſt virulent libellers, and they, who had preached ſubmiſſion, preached rebellion.

SUCH infractions of this aliance, or compact, happened ſometimes; but in general it held: and a joint uſurpation on the liberties of mankind was the effect of it. We have obſerved already that CONSTANTINE meant to govern the chriſtian flocks by their paſtors. Neither he, nor his ſucceſſors, perceived, that the imperial and kingly power might be controlled in time by the very expedient by which they hoped to govern more abſolutely. Neither he, nor they, apprehended ſoon enough, that if a degree of eccleſiaſtical power was neceſſary to maintain religion, religion might become an expedient to render this power exorbitant. The clergy employed it to ſerve the ambition of princes: why ſhould they not

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employ it to ſerve more effectually their own? All this happened in time, and was brought about by ſlow, but ſure, degrees. The church claimed at firſt eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction, as it was called, alone; cognizance of ſins againſt the laws of God, rather than of crimes againſt the laws of civil ſocieties, and of matters purely ſpiritual that related to the conſciences of men and that the civil power could not properly judge. But then among theſe objects of eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction, diſcipline and manners, two very vague appellations and liable to be much extended, were contained. Sins were multiplied by variety of doctrines; and as they were puniſhed by diſcipline, they were multiplied too by that. Things that could not be deemed ſpiritual were hawled in as things appertaining to ſpirituals. Thus eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction was extended: and the emperors confirmed it, not only by referring ſuch matters to the judgment of ſynods and ſpiritual courts, but by their poſitive edicts.

THAT they were indifferent enough about doctrines, and more ſolicitous to eſtabliſh uniformity than orthodoxy, may be well ſuſpected of ſeveral. CONSTANTINE favored the nicean doctrine, in hopes to eſtabliſh uniformity by it. But when he found that it received different interpretations, and that ATHANASIUS was a principal obſtacle to all terms of accommodation, he ſhewed favor to the other. He perſecuted ATHANASIUS, he hearkened more than ever to EUSEBIUS of Nicomedia, and

when he came to die, he died in that city, a little after he had been baptiſed by EUSEBIUS. Some of your writers, indeed, would perſuade, that he was baptiſed at Rome by SYLVESTER, in order to give ſome color to that impudent forgery of his donation to that pope and the roman church. But how ſhould they perſuade, by fabulous traditions, and ſuch anachroniſms as even Jews would bluſh to own, againſt the tenor of authentic hiſtory, and the monuments of the age; for ſuch we muſt repute the dates of his edicts to be in this caſe? I think that his ſucceſſors, who appear the moſt attached to reigning orthodox opinions, might act on the ſame principle. They diſcovered, and they might have diſcovered ſooner, that theſe theological diſputes are indeterminable in their nature. They imagined, and they might well imagine after what they had ſeen, tho the notion be not abſolutely true, that tranquillity could not be preſerved in the ſtate without uniformity in religion. To procure this uniformity, therefore, councils provincial and general were called and held on every occaſion. They were called and held, the general councils at leaſt were ſo, by the imperial authority, and not by that of the patriarch of Rome, nor that of the patriarch of Conſtantinople, in the firſt ages after the eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity. They were compoſed, no doubt, much like thoſe that have been above deſcribed, that is, very ſcandalouſly: and they would have decreed to little purpoſe, if their authority had ſtood alone. But that of the emperors

emperors bore them out. The emperors wanted only a pretence to force an uniform ſubmiſſion to ſome deciſion or other; and their authority was juſt ſufficient for that purpoſe in vulgar prejudice. Thus the allied powers, the hierarchy and the monarchy, have acted ever ſince. Theſe farces were renewed in every age: in every age their conſequences were more or leſs tragical; and this is the authority to which the chriſtian world has been reſigned in matters of religion.

SECTION XXXII.

THE religious ſociety roſe very faſt, by ſuch means as theſe, to great pre-eminence over the civil in the empire, and to an influence over private conſciences, that rendered their diſputes, ſometimes about trifling ceremonies, and ſometimes about unintelligible ſpeculations, a new ſource of diſſenſion among mankind, unknown to the pagan world, and even greater than any of thoſe that provoke the moſt barbarous nations to exceſſes of cruelty. But there were other means, which encreaſed this pre-eminence and influence vaſtly, and enabled the church to do ſtill greater miſchief to the ſtate. One of theſe means we may reckon to have been the improvement that was made in the hierarchical ſyſtem. Chriſtianity was a numerous ſect before CONSTANTINE, or CONSTANTINE would have been a Chriſtian no more than LICINIUS. But the ſame order and the ſame polity, which were eſtabliſhed afterwards, could

could not be eſtabliſhed, either in particular churches, or in the church in general, whilſt it was a ſect. There was a ſort of mixed government, ariſtocratical and democratical, in the churches, and ſome of theſe might correſpond and convene together. But in the firſt caſe, there was not power ſufficient to enforce ſubordination, nor facility, nor ſafety enough in the ſecond, whilſt theſe churches were diſperſed far and wide under heathen governments. Preſbyters or elders ruled the churches. They were all biſhops, that is, overſeers, alike, and co-equal in rank and power, till, factions ariſing, one preſbyter was appointed by the apoſtles, or choſen by the faithful, to govern the reſt, and was ſtyled the biſhop "eminentiæ gratia." Pre-eminence and ſubordination were eſtabliſhed, for much the ſame reaſon, even among theſe ſuperior preſbyters or biſhops. When metropolitans or archbiſhops began to be known in the church is not very certain. But I ſuppoſe it is certain that the biſhop of a church eſtabliſhed in any metropolis preſided in every aſſembly over the other preſbyters of the province, even before the reign of CONSTANTINE. Thus you ſee that the democratical form of church government, which obtained in the days of the apoſtles, when every one was a teacher that would be ſo, and when they themſelves had no other authority among the faithful than that of firſt preachers of the goſpel and firſt founders of churches, grew early to be ariſtocratical. You ſee, likewiſe, how early this form began to tend to the monarchical. It tended to it

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in every ſucceeding age more and more. As CONSTANTINE changed the religion, he made great changes in the conſtitution of the empire, in the military order, and in the civil adminiſtration. He created new and higher offices in the ſtate: ſo did the clergy in the church. He conſtituted vicars over the governors of provinces: ſo primates were raiſed above metropolitans. The praefecti praetorio had a rank above the vicars: ſo patriarchs had, when ever they got it, over primates. The eccleſiaſtical power roſe up from a rough and broad baſis to the form of a pyramid; and if the laſt ſtone was not laid to crown the fabric, it was attempted to be laid. In plain terms, if there had been an uninterrupted ſucceſſion of popes like GREGORY the ſeventh, during a century, the weſt might have ſeen, as well as the eaſt, a whimſical but real empire founded on ſuperſtition. A reputed vicar of God, the pope, might have governed here as abſolutely, as a reputed divinity, the dairo, did there. But the fates of the dairo and the pope have been much alike. The former is depoſed, confined, and ſtill adored: the latter has been much degraded, if not depoſed. His power is confined, if not his perſon; and, tho his thunder be heard no longer, he maintains the pageantry of an eccleſiaſtical JUPITER.

IT may appear matter of wonder, that a body of men as ignorant and as profligate, as that of the clergy ſhewed itſelf to be as ſoon as it figured in the empire, ſhould be able to aſſume, under pretence

tence of religion, a power equally exorbitant in the exerciſe, and miſchievous in the conſequences. But our wonder will ceaſe, if we conſider another of the means that were employed to bring this about. Superſtition took the place of religion, and faith of morality. To profeſs a belief of what no man underſtood, and to perform all the external duties which the church required, paſſed in thoſe days, and I apprehend they do ſo ſtill among many, for the ſum of religion. The athanaſian creed had little intention to make better men, and better citizens. The eight or nine creeds of the Arians had probably as little; and yet an aſſent to theſe creeds would have covered a multitude of ſins, better than charity: and the vileſt of men would have had a fairer chance for ſalvation, in either of theſe ſects, for the merit of believing, than the moſt virtuous of men, out of it, for the merit of acting all their lives as ſuch. A religion, which conſiſted in the profeſſion of an implicit belief, and in the practice of certain external duties, was much more grateful to the generality of men, than a ſpiritual religion that ſhewed itſelf outwardly by a ſtrict practice of all the duties of public and private morality. As ſoon, therefore, as theology and ſuperſtition had introduced ſuch a religion in the place of original chriſtianity, the one paſſed eaſily for the other; the inclinations of mankind helped the deception; the vices of the laity were indulged, the vices of the clergy were covered, by it. The ſolemn manner in which theſe men officiated impoſed on the vulgar of all ranks,

ranks, who were ſeduced by the eye, and led by the ear. The very habits of biſhops and prieſts contributed much to the ſame purpoſes, as St. GREGORY of Nazianzum obſerves in one of the diſcourſes to which I referred above; the venerable ephod, the caſſoc of SAMUEL, the humble walking ſtaff, and thoſe ornaments of the head that denoted virginity *.

BUT farther. Leſt all this ſhould not be ſufficient to keep up the falſe notions of religion, which could alone maintain a profligate clergy in the pre-eminence and authority they had uſurped, another expedient was employed. It was of ſuch a nature, that it might have been thought more proper to expoſe and aggravate, by the contraſt it created, than to conceal and atone for the general turpitude of the clergy. But the promoters of it knew what they did. They truſted to the abſurdity of mankind, and they followed, with confidence and ſucceſs, the example ſet them by the clergy of the moſt antient nations. The order of the magi, for inſtance, was not leſs ambitious, nor more virtuous probably, than they were: and the ſame might be preſumed of other eccleſiaſtical orders that had floriſhed in the eaſt. But in all theſe orders there had been particular men, and ſects of men, who retired from the world, and dedicated themſelves to lives of ſeeming ſanctity

* Cernimus venerandam ephodum, et SAMUELIS diploïdem, ſcipionem humilem, capitis ornamenta virginibus peculiaria, etc.

and

and real auſterity, by which they maintained a reverence for the groſſeſt ſuperſtitions, and for the much larger part of the ſame eccleſiaſtical body who remained in the world, and were not exempt from the corruptions of it. PYTHAGORAS had imitated theſe inſtitutions; and the Jews, who had borrowed much from the Greeks after ALEXANDER's expedition had brought them acquainted, ſeemed to have copied in the ſame inſtance after him. If the Sadducees might be ſaid to reſemble the Epicureans, and the Phariſees the Stoicians, ſure I am that a nearer reſemblance might be found between the Eſſenes and the diſciples of PYTHAGORAS, who were behind the curtain, and who lived in community. The Eſſenes confined themſelves to Paleſtine; but the Therapeutae were a ſort of helleniſt Eſſenes, who diſperſed themſelves, as the Chriſtians had done, into Greece and other countries, but principally into Egypt; for which reaſon one of the names was better known to JOSEPHUS, and the other to PHILO. Nothing can be more admirable than the ſanctity and auſterity of this ſect, whether appearing in the world, or hid in their ſolitudes. EUSEBIUS, whom an improbability ſeldom ſtopped, would have made Chriſtians of them; as ſeveral antient and modern divines have endeavoured to do after him, but to no purpoſe. Chriſtianity was little ſpread, ſcarce known, and ſcarce diſtinguiſhed from judaiſm, when PHILO gave an account of this ſect. But this ſect had been long in fulneſs of fame, before it was imitated by

by Chriſtians; for it had been ſo even before chriſtianity.

THE decian and other perſecutions firſt, religious melancholy, and even a deſire of fame afterwards, might carry many Chriſtians to lead an anchoretic life, as PAUL and ANTHONY did in the deſerts of Egypt, about whom ATHANASIUS and JEROM have publiſhed ſo many ſtupid lies. The cenobitic life began much about their time; for it was in the fourth century that BASIL inſtituted his order. But this inſtitution did not come into great vogue till the want of it was more felt, in the very beginning of the ſixth century. It was then that BENEDICT founded his order in Italy, from which ſo many others ſprouted up like the ſuckers of a great tree. Monaſtic inſtitutions multiplied in every age, in the weſt particularly; for they grew more and more neceſſary, in every age, to the church, as the eccleſiaſtical order in general gave more and more ſcandal, and as the uſurpations of the roman pontiffs, who made great advances towards a ſpiritual monarchy, increaſed. Enthuſiaſm, abetted and conducted by the policy of the church, was a principal motive to ſuch eſtabliſhments: and indeed no other motive could have filled theſe numerous ſocieties. The fervor in every one was great at firſt: and they renewed, in the opinion of mankind, that ſimplicity, that innocence, that zeal, and that devout auſterity, by which primitive Chriſtians were ſuppoſed to have diſtinguiſhed themſelves. But this fervor ſoon grew

grew cool, and luxury, and vices of all kinds, as prevalent in theſe religious ſocieties, as in any other parts of the chriſtian church. The expedient however, that ſerved to maintain eccleſiaſtical pre-eminence and authority, did not fail for this. The ſecular clergy had been provided for amply, that they might have the means and encouragements neceſſary to make them anſwer the ends of their inſtitution, and that no excuſe might be left them for neglecting theſe ends. But when they turned into ſcandal what was deſigned for edification, and forfeited, therefore, their right to all they enjoyed by the beneficence of the faithful; when they ſhould have been reformed, or their revenues ſhould have been given to others, inſtead of this they kept their poſſeſſions tho they broke their conventions with the public; and the public was at the expence of enriching another clergy. Juſt ſo again, and as faſt as this other clergy grew corrupt, nothing was taken from them; but new orders of the ſame kind were founded to ſcreen them and the ſecular clergy both, or to atone for the iniquity of both: and that eternal bubble, the laity, paid the whole immenſe and growing charge.

THUS have things continued to the preſent age: and the religious ſociety, among Chriſtians, has imitated ſucceſsfully the policy of religious ſocieties that floriſhed, above three thouſand years ago, in the pagan world. You muſt not be ſurpriſed at this aſſertion. It is eaſy to ſhew that the vaſt variety of religions, which prevailed in the world, are

are derived ultimately from a few general principles, common to all men becauſe they ariſe from the common fund of human nature: and that, in conſequence of this, many rites and ceremonies, many inſtitutions and orders, muſt deſcend, ſometimes with more and ſometimes with leſs affinity, to the lateſt poſterity. They deſcend, like torrents of water, which are not the ſame to the ſight nor taſte, when the length of their courſe, the ſoils through which they have paſſed, and the mixture of other ſtreams, have purified ſome, and rendered others more foul. But they deſcend from the ſame ſprings: and, like thoſe mighty rivers which preſerve the freſhneſs of their waters very far into the ſea, they preſerve much of their original character, as they roll along through the vaſt ocean of time. Turn your eyes even at this day to the eaſt. You will diſcover rites, ceremonies, inſtitutions, and orders of men, wherever the devaſtations or barbarous nations have not deſtroyed the people, as well as the religions, of countries, much like to thoſe which prevailed in the ſame countries in the remoteſt antiquity. The bramins have a ſort of allegorical polytheiſm; as I ſuppoſe that their predeceſſors the brachmans had. They hold the pre-exiſtence and tranſmigration of ſouls; they abſtain from fleſh; they retain the notions of pollution and purification; they waſh away ſins in the waters of the Ganges; they pretend to abſtract themſelves from ſenſe, and to contemplate the Supreme Being by intenſe meditation. The brachmans were poſſibly a ſect of gymnoſophiſts:

and there are at this time joghis and faquirs in the eaſt, who carry their auſterity and penance to ſuch ſurpriſing exceſs, that the carthuſian monks, or thoſe of La Trappe, compared with them, may paſs for ſects of luxurious ſybarites. Should any of theſe reverend fathers hear it ſaid that they are deſcended from antient, and outdone by modern, idolaters, they would be extremely ſcandaliſed: and yet nothing is more true. It is as true, as it is to ſay that they ſerve the ſame purpoſes.

WHILST the eyes of mankind were dazzled by theſe appearances of ſanctity, which ſome few of the religious ſociety, who devoted themſelves, without knowing that they did ſo, for the reſt, held forth, the reſt purſued the deſigns of their ambition with great art, and uninterrupted perſeverance. They could not have been atchieved with leſs of either; for even contrary ſyſtems were made to co-operate in promoting them; poverty and riches, humility and oſtentation, the want and the exceſs of authority and power. This I mean. The ſecular clergy not only ſcreened themſelves behind the apparent ſanctity of the regular, which caſt a luſtre on the whole church; they not only impoſed by the religious merit of others, but they accuſtomed the world by degrees to reverence them for the wealth and dignities they enjoyed, and for the pomp and magnificence with which they affected to appear. As the true ſpirit of religion decayed, and as that of ſuperſtition took it's place, this was more eaſily brought about: and he, who imagined

imagined that he paid honor to a ſucceſſor of the apoſtles, paid it in reality to the patriarch, the primate, or the metropolitan; dignities which eccleſiaſtical ambition had aſſumed, on the model of thoſe which had been created in the ſtate.

THE eaſtern church roſe by much the ſame means, but could never riſe to the ſame power, as that of the weſt. Many reaſons of this difference will occur to thoſe, who are converſant in the hiſtory of the church, and in that of the latter empire. I ſhall inſiſt on one, which was the principal, and in the conſequences of which the weſtern provinces were moſt concerned in thoſe days, as they were alone concerned afterwards. The reaſon is this. The opportunities, of advancing early and ſucceſsfully towards a monarchical form of government, were much more favorable in the weſt than in the eaſt. The patriarchs had a ſort of tetrarchical, or ethnarchical authority, for I ſuppoſe it is not eaſy to diſtinguiſh them; and beſides thoſe enſigns of honor, which primates and metropolitans affected to have as well as they, the patriarchs aſſumed one which had belonged to the emperors ſolely, and enjoyed it in common with them; that I mean of lights or fires carried in ſolemn pomp before them. From the inſtitution of this dignity there were three patriarchs, the patriarchs of Rome, of Antioch, and of Alexandria. He of Rome remained alone in the weſt; but in the eaſt two others were added, a patriarch of Conſtantinople, and laſt of all a patriarch of Jeruſalem.

It is ſaid that the biſhop of Rome, LEO the firſt, oppoſed ſtrenuouſly the erection of this patriarchate. If he did ſo, altho it was evidently an advantage to him that the eaſt ſhould be divided into many patriarchates, whilſt he alone was patriarch in the weſt, and might hope to be ſo of the weſt and the eaſt too, we may venture to ſay that he did not judge of his true intereſt as nicely as popes have done generally, and as it became him to do in particular, who was thought to join in his conduct the character of the fox to the character, as well as name, of the lion.

GREGORY the firſt, and the great, as he is called, ſaw the advantage of being ſole patriarch in the weſt, whilſt there were four biſhops decorated with the ſame title in the eaſt: and he reſolved to improve it. If this rank had been given on a religious account, it ought to have been given ſurely, in the firſt place, to the biſhop of Jeruſalem; ſince chriſtianity began there, and was propagated originally from thence; tho other churches, thoſe of Antioch, of Alexandria, and of Rome particularly, might ſeem to be co-eval with it. But theſe were great cities, and had great dependences, whilſt Jeruſalem lay in aſhes, from which miſerable ſtate ſhe never aroſe to her former grandeur; and whilſt Byzantium was neither an imperial nor a chriſtian city. The pre-eminence of biſhops was determined, in ſome meaſure, by the pre-eminence of cities, ſo that when patriarchs were made, tho theſe were, as biſhops had been, equal in

in authority, and tho their authority was confined to their patriarchates, and never, I believe, very well aſcertained even in them; yet they might contend for a priority of rank among themſelves, and he who held the firſt rank among them, would hold it of courſe in the whole church. That the pope of Rome, which was the ſole imperial city during the firſt three hundred years of the chriſtian aera, ſhould claim this priority, and that other patriarchs ſhould acquieſce in it, cannot be thought extraordinary, if it ſhould be thought true. They might allow him this primacy, for ought I know. But if they did, they gave him nothing more than a feather to adorn his mitre. Not only other patriarchs were ſtyled by the ſame pompous titles that were given to him, but biſhops too. Popes were contradicted, reproved, cenſured, even by theſe: and nothing can be more evident than this, that they reputed the roman biſhop to be, with regard to them, the firſt among equals, "primus inter "pares," only: that is, he was biſhop of the firſt ſee, "primae ſedis," and had on that account a precedency, or nominal primacy. This indeed was little of itſelf, but it might lead to more. A ſeeming primacy might give one that was real: and as titles are often derived from powers, power might be derived in time from this empty title.

THUS the biſhops of Rome, whilſt they were only biſhops, thought; and were, therefore, fond of a title, empty, as it was, that could not be conteſted with them, nor was conteſted, till Conſtan-

tinople was built, and the ſeat of the empire tranſlated thither. Then it became diſputable indeed which was the firſt ſee: and if the title of ecumenical patriarch; which began to ſteal into uſe, as moſt eccleſiaſtical uſurpations have done, and as, I believe, this did, tho LEO the firſt is ſaid to have refuſed it; could have been obtained by him of Conſtantinople, all the advantages might have been loſt to him of Rome, which he expected to reap with this title from his growing primacy. This GREGORY the firſt ſaw, and he neglected nothing to prevent it. Well may it be ſaid that he neglected, and that he ſtuck at nothing to prevent it, when we conſider the conduct he held towards PHOCAS. MAURITIUS was a good prince. GREGORY, the moſt fawning, the moſt canting, and the moſt ambitious of prieſts, had extolled his charity, and his piety too, even when he beſeeched the emperor to revoke an edict he had made, and which the good biſhop had executed, however, in the mean time. JOHN, the patriarch of Conſtantinople, paſſed for a pious prelate, and was of ſuch remarkable auſterity, that he acquired the name of the faſter. PHOCAS was the moſt vicious and cruel of men. But JOHN aſſumed the title of ecumenical patriarch: and MAURITIUS favored his pretenſions. Theſe were irremiſſible crimes in both; whilſt the merit of favoring the ambitious humility of GREGORY, who affected to take no higher title than that of ſervant of the ſervants of God, was ſufficient to make a TRAJAN of PHOCAS. This inhuman uſurper, not content to put the empreſs,

preſs, her three daughters, and almoſt all the relations and friends of MAURITIUS, to death, cauſed the five ſons of his maſter to be murdered in his preſence, and under the eyes of their father *; who was afterwards ſtretched out on the bodies of theſe innocents, and made a ſacrifice, on that bleeding altar, to the ſame unrelenting cruelty. This ſcene of horror communicated none to GREGORY. The revolution, however brought about, gave him, his ſee at leaſt, the victory over his rival: and he thanked God, moſt impiouſly, for it. The three letters which he wrote on this occaſion to PHOCAS and LEONTIA, in all the proſtitution of flattery; the ſolemn reception that he gave their images, which he placed in the oratory of the martyr CAESARIUS; and the prayers which the ſenate and clergy offered up for the proſperity of theſe monſters, in a public thankſgiving, by his direction; are monuments of the infamous methods by which it was thought lawful to promote the deſigns of eccleſiaſtical ambition. GREGORY's deſign ſucceeded; for PHOCAS gave, tho not to him, yet to his ſucceſſors, the title he would not ſuffer the faſting prelate to aſſume. But GREGORY's memory muſt be abhorred by every honeſt mind; and the impudence of your church, forgive the expreſſion, in making this man a ſaint, or the folly of many in ours who ſpeak of him as ſuch, cannot be atoned for by the modeſty that has been ſhewn in preferring ſcarce any other pope to the ſame rank ſince that time.

* MAIMB. Hiſt. du pont. de St. GREG.

THE roman pontiffs had more opportunities, and therefore greater encouragement than any others, to promote theſe deſigns both at home and abroad. There were no patriarchs in the weſt to ſhare with them the luſtre of this dignity. In a few generations after CONSTANTINE, the empire of the weſt, which he had weakened, fell into ruins: and as there was no emperor in Italy after the depoſition of AUGUSTULUS by ODOACER, ſo the remains of the imperial dignity in that country were not ſufficient to overſhadow theirs; eſpecially after they founded their primacy no longer on the authority of an imperial reſcript, but on a ſuppoſed divine inſtitution. On the contrary, theirs increaſed as that of the emperors died away. Italy lay expoſed to the invaſions of barbarous nations: ſo did Gaul, and Britain, and the other provinces. Of all theſe misfortunes the roman pontiffs made their profit. The pre-eminence they had acquired, and much more their induſtry, their perſeverance, and their ſkill, made them in ſome ſort, and on ſeveral occaſions, the protectors of Italy, and of Rome eſpecially. About the middle of the fifth century, ATTILA took Aquileia, Pavia, and Milan, ravaged all the country we call Lombardy, and threatened even Rome. The biſhop of this city went at the head of an embaſſy to him: and tho the fabulous circumſtances, that have been invented to give a miraculous appearance to the ſucceſs of the legation, deſerve our contempt; yet the legation had ſucceſs in appearance, ſince ATTILA, for

for ſome reaſon or other, left Italy: and Rome was delivered from her fears. In the ſame pontificate, GENSERIC, the Vandal, ſurpriſed and took Rome at the ſolicitation of EUDOXIA, who deſired to revenge the death of one huſband and to get rid of another. The pope, LEO, had not the ſame ſucceſs on this occaſion as on the former *. The Arian was not ſo complaiſant as the Pagan. Rome was pillaged fourteen days together. But ſome of the churches were ſaved, the town was not burned, nor the people put to the ſword; and all that happened leſs than had been apprehended was imputed to the interceſſion of LEO.

THE hiſtory of this fifth century, and of the three or four that follow, is extremely confuſed and dark: and yet we are able to diſcern a moſt ſurpriſing ſyſtem of political conduct, founded on the ſame principles, and carried on through the whole time, till that ſpiritual tyranny, which had done ſo much miſchief under an ariſtocratical form before, and has made ſuch havoc in the world ſince under the monarchical form, was fully eſtabliſhed. I touch the ſubject lightly, but I muſt ſay ſomething more upon it.

SECTION XXXIII.

THE biſhops of Rome had, beſides the advantages they procured to themſelves, and thoſe that time and accidents put into their hands, one

* MAIMB. Hiſt. du pont. de St. LEON.

original

original advantage which has been hinted at already, of the greateſt importance to them at Rome, and every where elſe, from an habitual reſpect, that the ſubjects of the empire retained, and the conquerors of the weſtern provinces contracted, for the antient capital of the empire. It was natural for the Romans, when Rome became chriſtian, to deſire that their biſhop ſhould repreſent the ſovereign pontiff, who had reſided among them whilſt they were heathens. Laical vanity might, and eccleſiaſtical ambition could not fail to deſire this. The conſent of both made all the papal uſurpations eaſy: and the people in general liked better a voluntary ſubjection, for ſuch it was at firſt, to their biſhops, than a forced ſubjection to prefects or any other imperial officers. The popes took the pomp and ſtate of the pontifex maximus, before they aſſumed the title: and the conteſts about their elections, bloody conteſts in the ſtreets and in the churches too, ſhewed what an object of ambition the biſhopric of Rome was, even before the deſtruction of the weſtern empire. Theſe pontiffs, in truth, derived their ſovereignty more properly from NUMA, than from CHRIST: and pagan prejudices had ſome effect, even when the world was become chriſtian, in creating a reſpect for them. The title of ecumenical biſhop extended, and realiſed, in ſome inſtances, their claims. But the title of biſhops of the eternal city helped the impoſition. This impoſition of the popes did not prevail much among the Arians, becauſe of their oppoſition to athaniſm: and therefore,

fore, as they perſecuted this ſect wherever they had power to do it, they were obſequious enough to arian princes, under whom they had not this power: an example whereof might be taken from the embaſſy of one of theſe popes, whoſe name I do not remember, and whom THEODORIC ſent to JUSTIN to perſuade that emperor to ſhew more indulgence to the Arians in his dominions, leſt the gothic king ſhould take repriſals on the orthodox in the weſt. But wherever orthodoxy prevailed, theſe titles procured a great regard to the ſee of Rome, and an influence, which the popes improved, directly and indirectly, to confirm their authority where it was acknowledged, and to propagate it, under the notion of converſions to chriſtianity, where it was not acknowledged.

THIS calls to my mind the miſſion, that GREGORY, the ſame I have ſpoken of already, ſent into Britain. This example will ſhew what that chriſtianity was which the popes propagated; and how the groſſeſt frauds, that iniquity ever invented, or impudence impoſed, were eſtabliſhed under that venerable name. BRUNEHAULT, queen of France, muſt paſs for one of the worſt women that ever lived, if the general conſent of hiſtorians can eſtabliſh a character. GREGORY held an intimate correſpondence with this woman: and this intimacy with her, and with PHOCAS, is ſuch a brand on his memory, that we might be ſurpriſed to find his name in the calendar of your ſaints, if we did not find that of another GREGO-

RY,

RY, GREGORY the ſeventh, there. BRUNEHAULT was extremely liberal to the eccleſiaſtical order. She built churches, founded convents, and had a great devotion to relics. So much liberality, and ſo much ſuperſtition, might have made a ſaint even of her too, notwithſtanding her crimes; and ſhe might have ſtood over your altars in company with her panegyriſt. This pious queen contributed not only to maintain the authority of the biſhop of Rome in France, where it was reſpected already, but to propagate it where it was not yet known; for it is plain, that the converſion of the Saxons to papal chriſtianity was concerted with her. The more immediate inſtrument of this converſion indeed was BERTHE daughter of CHARIBERT king of France, and wife of ETHELBERT king of the ſouth Saxons: ſhe protected, ſhe introduced the miſſionaries: and the king and his ſubjects were converted to the roman religion.

I DO not ſpeak improperly, when I ſay the roman religion: for altho GREGORY ſays, in a letter to BRUNEHAULT, only this, that "he heard "the church of England had a mind to become "chriſtian*;" yet is it certain that the Saxons had the knowledge of chriſtianity, as it was taught in the firſt ages, before AUSTIN and his monks came to preach it as it had been modelled, and, to ſpeak plainly, corrupted, in the church of

* Indicamus ad nos perveniſſe eccleſiam anglicanam velle fieri chriſtianam. Lib. v. ep. 59.

Rome

Rome and the other chriſtian churches. The Britons had been converted long before to the chriſtian religion: and the Saxons had a knowledge of it from them. On this ſuppoſition we may account, and on any other it is impoſſible to account, for the obſtinate adherence of the Saxons, after their ſuppoſed converſion by AUSTIN, to the aſiatic and moſt antient rule of celebrating eaſter, which had been changed in the church of Rome, and which AUSTIN oppoſed. The Britons had been driven into a remote corner of the world: and the Saxons were a greater barrier, than the ſea itſelf, between them and the continent. They retained, therefore, their religion as they had received it; and knew nothing of the additions that had been made to it ſince the time of their converſion, nor particularly any thing of the roman biſhop's pretenſions to a ſupremacy. As they knew, ſo they might, and ſo I believe they did, teach the Saxons: and it was neither hard for one to teach, nor for the other to learn, chriſtianity, in a ſimplicity that came nearer to that wherein CHRIST had taught it to the poor and the ignorant. But this was to be unlearned: and the ſole object of AUSTIN's miſſion was to teach both Britons and Saxons a new-fangled chriſtianity, and to inſpire them with a fooliſh reſpect for ſuperſtitious uſages, and with an abject ſubmiſſion to the ſee of Rome. That theſe were the points he labored, appears from all we know of the conduct he held, from his diſputes with the Britons, from the inſtructions he aſked, and from

thoſe

thoſe which the pope gave him. The height to which he carried his legatine power, and the inſolence with which he treated the britiſh biſhops, demonſtrate the ſpirit in which he came, and the purpoſe he came for. The declaration that theſe biſhops ſent him, or the abbot of Bangor by their direction, was modeſt, but firm. They declared themſelves ſubject to the church of God, and to the pope of Rome. But how? As they were to every godly Chriſtian, etc. Other obedience than this, they ſay to AUSTIN, that they do not know to be due to him whom he called pope: and that they were under the government of the biſhop of Caerleon upon Uſke, etc.

THE Britons ſtood out againſt the uſurpations of the popes many centuries: but the Saxons ſoon crouched under them. The Saxons were a fierce and a free, but they were an ignorant, people: and therefore falſe notions of chriſtian inſtitution were eaſily impoſed upon them. From notions thus impoſed, the clergy derived pretenſions to ſuch powers, ſuch immunities, and ſuch pre-eminence of rank and dignity, as raiſed the biſhops to an equality with princes and kings in ſome reſpects, and to a ſuperiority over them in as many, as were, or could be made to ſeem, relative to religion; for in theſe "omnibus dignitatibus praeſunt" was a maxim which they had the front to avow, and which the civil ſociety were ſtupid enough to admit. What they pretended to belong to them, they aſſumed: and what they

aſſumed

aſſumed they juſtified by canons, that is, by laws of their own making. The eccleſiaſtical roman yoke was ſo well fixed on the necks of the Saxons, that it grew more and more confirmed, till the Normans came in; and then it did not become lighter, for they brought the ſame prejudices along with them *: ſo that our iſland was a province, and a farm, to the court of Rome near five hundred years longer. How eaſy ſoever it would be to deſcend into all theſe particulars, I ſhould find it tedious: and you know that I never engaged to write treatiſes, nor any thing more than eſſays; if my part in our occaſional converſations, extended on paper, can deſerve even that name. But ſince I mentioned the few falſe notions concerning chriſtian inſtitution, that impoſed on the Saxons, and ſince I think the uſurpations of the religious ſociety have been founded every where elſe on the ſame, I will endeavour to expoſe them to you in a few words, to ſhew you how the firſt deception aroſe in the whole chriſtian commonwealth, and how the monarchical tyranny of the biſhop of Rome was grafted on it.

SECTION XXXIV.

I AM not a diſciple of HOBBES, but I embrace truth wherever I find it, or whoever ſhews it to me: and he ſhews it to me, I think, when he maintains that the preſent church of CHRIST, by

* Vid. BACON's treatiſe from SELDEN's notes.

which

which we mean in this place the whole body of Chriſtians, is not the kingdom of CHRIST. This opinion however, that it is ſo, grew early into belief, and will be ſupported as long as that order of men can ſupport it, who have aſſumed, under pretence of being appointed to govern and adminiſter in it, an eſtabliſhment diſtinct from the civil, and a moſt unreaſonable and unequal ſhare of wealth and power in almoſt every chriſtian ſtate. No opinion, however, can be more evidently falſe. The expreſs declaration which CHRIST made when he ſaid, "My kingdom is not of "this world," the conduct he held, the doctrines he taught, and the commiſſion he gave to his apoſtles, prove it be ſo. If it had been the divine intention to eſtabliſh, at that time, the kingdom of CHRIST, he would have appeared, no doubt, more conformably to the expectations of the Jews, in majeſty and power. But they miſtook the ſenſe of their prophecies, it ſeems; their expectations were vain, and the purpoſes of infinite wiſdom opened themſelves in a very different manner.

THE Meſſiah ſhewed himſelf to the world in the loweſt form of life, and avoided all appearances of affecting any higher rank, even that of the Meſſiah, which was diſtinguiſhed from that of king; tho the Jews, miſled by their prophecies, could not conceive the two characters to be diſtinguiſhable. He came not to reign, but to redeem; not to triumph, but to ſuffer; not to erect a

kingdom, but to prepare men for that which was to be erected at his ſecond coming. It may ſeem ſtrange that he could conceal himſelf, notwithſtanding the ſigns and wonders that illuſtrated his birth, the proclamation of him from above at the time of his baptiſm, and all the miracles which he wrought, chiefly indeed out of Jeruſalem, during the time of his miniſtry. But it is not ſtrange that he uſed all the means of keeping up this concealment of himſelf to the laſt, and in a great degree even from his diſciples, on the hypotheſis here mentioned. If he had declared himſelf publicly and plainly to be the Meſſiah, either the Jews would have taken him by force to make him king, as St. JOHN tells us that they, who had ſeen his miracles, were ready to do; or they would have looked on him, from the firſt, as an impoſtor, ſince he pretended to be the Meſſiah, and yet aſſumed no dominion, nor claimed any kingdom *. In one caſe, the deſign of his coming would have been entirely perverted. In the other, the Jews might have laid immediate hold on him, and have taken away his life. In neither, could he have had the means, nor the time, neceſſary to perform all the purpoſes of his miſſion, and to fulfil all the prophecies according to his own applications of them.

To prevent theſe effects of the miſtaken zeal of the Jews, and to keep himſelf in the ſtate of an innocent man towards the roman government,

* Reaſonab. of chriſtian.

without being at the expence of more miracles for theſe purpoſes according to Mr. LOCKE, his conduct was reſerved and cautious, his language myſtical and parabolical. But the repeated declarations he made, during the courſe of his miſſion, that his kingdom was not of this world, were ſufficient to keep him from being obnoxious to the Romans: and tho he owned himſelf to PILATE the king of a world to come, we ſee that PILATE found no fault in him, and that he declared him an innocent man when he delivered him up to the Jews to be crucified. For what concern could PILATE or his maſter imagine they had in a world that was to come, in a future kingdom, in a kingdom of God, in a kingdom of heaven? In this manner, one part of the ſaviour's intentions was anſwered. His innocence was averred. But there was another part. He was not only to be innocent, he was to die innocent: and of this he made the Jews the inſtruments by a ſequel of the moſt artful behaviour, which Mr. LOCKE developes with a ſagacity that might give envy to the deepeſt divine that ever undertook to diſcover the economy of infinite wiſdom.

HE contrived to appear guilty to the Jews by the ſame declaration, by which he appeared innocent to the Romans. He appeared a very extraordinary perſon to both; and well he might: but he ſpoke plainly to one as far as they were concerned, and darkly and ambiguouſly to the other. He pretended to no kingdom: CAESAR had no rival

rival in him. But for this very reaſon he became criminal to the Jews. The miracles he performed, the obſcure expreſſions he let drop, induced ſome of the people to take him for the prophet that was to come, for the Meſſiah. But the Scribes, the Phariſees, and the bulk of the people, who hearkened, as he had bid them hearken, to thoſe who ſat in the ſeat of Moses, could not eaſily take him for the Meſſiah, conſiſtently with their prejudices; ſince he aſſumed no kingdom, nor pretended to any. Nay more, they could not have taken him eaſily for the Meſſiah, if they had been able to diſtinguiſh between the Meſſiah and the king; ſince he diſguiſed one of theſe characters, as he diſowned the other. This extraordinary perſon, therefore, was, according to their logic, an impoſtor. They were a rejected people for not believing him to be the Meſſiah on the faith of his miracles: and he kept them in this error, at leaſt he did nothing to draw them out of it, that they might bring him to the croſs when his time ſhould be come, and complete the redemption of mankind, without knowing what they did, but at their own expence.

He paſſed for a Galilean, tho he was born at Bethlehem: by which one proof of his being the Meſſiah was ſuppreſſed. Even his precurſor, he who had baptiſed him, he who had been a witneſs, when he baptiſed him, of the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon him, and had heard a voice from heaven declare "This is my beloved Son in whom

"I am well pleaſed," which voice, therefore, muſt have been the voice of God the Father; even he did not know certainly that the Son of God was the Meſſiah. When JOHN was in priſon he ſent to aſk JESUS, ſo little did he know him to be the Meſſiah, "Art thou he that ſhould come, or "do we expect another?" The anſwer JESUS made was an appeal to his miracles, which proved him to be a very extraordinary perſon indeed; but which did not prove him in thoſe days, and ad homines, to be the Meſſiah; for a belief of the powers of magic was not as ridiculous then, as it is now; and the Phariſees had prepared the people to believe theſe very miracles wrought by BEELZEBUB. The anſwers he gave on other occaſions were not leſs equivocal, nor the language he held about himſelf at any time more explicit, than that wherein he declares himſelf the light of the world as long as he is in the world. He was ſo apprehenſive of being taken for the Meſſiah, leſt he ſhould be taken for a king too, that he ſcarce owned himſelf even to his diſciples, and that he commanded the devils who proclaimed him to be ſo, when he caſt them out, to ſay nothing of it. If he declared himſelf more openly, juſt before his death, to be the Meſſiah, he claimed to the laſt no actual kingdom, no kingdom of this world, neither before his death nor after it, till he ſhould come again in the glory of his Father, with his angels, to judge the world, and to render to every man according to his works.

THE

THE reſurrection, the aſcenſion of CHRIST, and the coming of the Paraclete or Comforter, who was to ſhew the diſciples all things, and bring to their remembrance all things which he had ſaid, made them underſtand more clearly, and believe more firmly, that he was the Meſſiah and the king. The prophets had ſpoken of him under both theſe characters confuſedly: and the Jews had been led, by theſe prophecies and by their partial interpretations of them, to imagine, not only that the Meſſiah and the king were to be one and the ſame perſon, in which they did not deceive themſelves; but that all the glorious things, which had been foretold of him, were to happen at once, and as ſoon as he ſhould appear; in which they flattered and deceived themſelves very fatally. The diſciples ſaw now, what they had not ſeen fully and clearly before. They ſaw that the two characters, and the offices belonging to each, were to be diſtinguiſhed. They ſaw that their maſter had already appeared in one, and had performed and ſuffered all that belonged to it. They believed, therefore, that he would ſoon appear in the other, as he gave them reaſon to expect he would according to their apprehenſions; that his kingdom, for the coming of which he had taught them to pray, would then come; and that, when he was ſeated in the throne of his glory, his immediate diſciples ſhould alſo ſit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael. He redeemed mankind at his firſt coming, and taught and exhorted them to prepare for his ſecond, when they,

who have believed in him, are to enjoy a glorious immortality. Then, and not till then, his kingdom will begin, properly and truly called ſo. The intermediate time is a time of regeneration and preparation. Divines talk of a kingdom of grace; but the expreſſion is figurative, and apt to convey a falſe idea. The kingdom of glory alone is CHRIST's kingdom. He inſtituted none that was to precede it. He exerciſed no dominion, no coercive power, nor delegated any to be exerciſed by others.

IF any ſuch had been delegated by him, it would have been ſo, doubtleſs, to his immediate diſciples the apoſtles, and to the ſeventy *. But when we examine their commiſſion, we find nothing of this kind in it. They were commiſſioned to teach or to preach to all nations, or, perhaps, to the loſt ſheep of Iſrael diſperſed into all nations, that JESUS was the Meſſiah. They were authoriſed to ſay, after their maſter, that his kingdom would come, that it was at hand; that they who received them, and the goſpel they taught, would be received into it; and that the ſtate of thoſe cities, who received them not, would be in that day, the day when the kingdom of CHRIST ſhould come, leſs tolerable than that of Sodom. They were to baptiſe ſuch as believed: and this baptiſm

* N. B. I ſay the ſeventy both here and elſewhere, in conformity to the general run of orthodox opinion, tho I know that we have no authority, but that of St. LUKE, for aſſuming this diſtinct number of diſciples.

or

or waſhing was made a ſign of regeneration, and admiſſion into the church of CHRIST here, in order to admiſſion into his kingdom hereafter. CHRIST gave his apoſtles another power, which ſeems to be conſequential to that of baptiſing, and therefore connected with it, the power of remitting or retaining ſins. Tho I do not pretend to dogmatiſe about the nature and extent of this power, yet I may pretend to ſay what it is not, and to what it does not extend. It is not a power to forgive, or not to forgive, to cancel or not to cancel, ſins, abſolutely and definitively. Such a power belongs to the great ſearcher of hearts alone. The apoſtles might admit thoſe, who profeſſed their belief in CHRIST by baptiſm, into the church, and retain them in it as long as they held the ſame faith, and brought forth fruits meet for repentance. They not only might, but it was their duty to do ſo, and St. JOHN cenſures very ſeverely DIOTREPHES, in his third epiſtle, for a contrary practice. If he who had offended on any occaſion appeared to be penitent, he might be abſolved, that is, his ſins were remitted, and he was retained in the chriſtian church. If he was impenitent, he could not be abſolved: his ſins were retained, and he was to the brethren as an heathen man and a publican. In theſe caſes, as in that of baptiſm, the apoſtles and their ſucceſſors were merely miniſters, who performed a ceremony, or pronounced a judgment. They could not refuſe baptiſm to believers: and it was not they, but the church, the congregation of the

faithful, properly, who retained an offender in their body by remitting his ſins, or drove him out by retaining them: that is, by refuſing to remit them: for which aſſertion we have the authority of CHRIST, in the eighteenth chapter of St. MATTHEW's Goſpel, and that of St. PAUL's example in his proceeding with regard to the fornicator in the church of Corinth.

THIS power, which CHRIST gave to his diſciples and to his church, was ſo far from being a coercive power, ſuch a power as kings delegate, and thoſe who govern under them exerciſe, ſuch a power, in ſhort, as may ſerve to ſhew that he meant to eſtabliſh any kingdom in this world, that it ſhews the very contrary. "Whoſe "ſoever ſins ye remit, they are remitted unto "them, and whoſe ſoever ſins ye retain, they are "retained." Again, "Whatſoever ye ſhall bind "on earth ſhall be bound in heaven; and what-"ſoever ye ſhall looſe on earth ſhall be looſed in "heaven." Theſe expreſſions, taken together, point at the other world, the world to come: and the full effect of the promiſes and threatnings they contain is to be expected there, not here. In this intermediate ſtate of preparation and probation, all that they, who are appointed miniſters of the goſpel, as ſuch can do, by virtue of the power delegated by the firſt paſſage, is to adviſe, exhort, admoniſh, and to ſeparate themſelves, and to purſuade the faithful to ſeparate, from the impenitent and refractory. This is all the

the power which the firſt of theſe paſſages gives. The ſecond gives no farther power: but it contains a promiſe, which muſt not be underſtood according to the natural import of the words, nor without very great mitigations of the ſenſe, leſt it ſhould be underſtood to imply ſuch an abſurdity as it would be impious to impute to the word of God, how deſirous ſoever divines may be to have it ſo underſtood. It would imply that CHRIST, when he comes at the laſt day in the glory of his Father, and to eſtabliſh his kingdom, will not come to judge the world, or the chriſtian part of it at leaſt, but merely to execute judgments already given, the judgments of the church. In ſhort, CHRIST gave no coercive power to his apoſtles: and they who ſucceeded them exerciſed none, till they obtained it, or ſtole it, from the kings whoſe kingdoms were of this world. Then, indeed, excommunications grew coercive, and ſeverely ſo: and powers, that were tyrannical in their execution, and civil in their origin, began to paſs for eccleſiaſtical and lawful powers, in the hands of men who had no right by their inſtitution to any that are coercive or penal. But if that were true, which is evidently falſe, that CHRIST had given ſuch powers to his apoſtles, as their ſucceſſors claim, and exerciſe too, wherever they are ſuffered to do ſo; yet there would be no reaſon to allow this claim now, nor was there any to allow it even in the primitive ages of chriſtianity. CHRIST breathed on his apoſtles, bid them receive the Holy Ghoſt, and we are bound to believe that he inſpired

ſpired the ſame ſpirit into them by this act, which deſcended afterwards more manifeſtly upon them and the diſciples under the figure of firey tongues. The gifts of the Spirit were then common, and evidenced themſelves by ſanctity of life, and by many other unequivocal ſigns. But theſe ſigns, ſanctity of life and miraculous operations, ſoon failed. Prieſts after that might blow on other prieſts, lay their hands on them, and bid them receive the Holy Ghoſt: but it was ſilly, and impious both, to perſuade the civil ſociety of Chriſtians that ſuch prieſts, as theſe were generally, could either give, or be worthy to receive, the Holy Ghoſt. This they did however: and it was neceſſary to carry on this illuſion, that they might carry on the other. As ſoon as they had perſuaded that the church of CHRIST was the kingdom of CHRIST, and that this order of men was appointed to govern in it, there was a neceſſity of perſuading likewiſe, that the ſame ſpirit, the ſame gifts and graces, which CHRIST had beſtowed on the apoſtles for the eſtabliſhment of his church, were conveyed down for the government of it by their order.

IF we had leſs experience of the powerful effects of ambition, avarice, and ſuperſtition, we might be ſurpriſed that ſome men have been hardy enough to aſſert, and others weak enough to believe, againſt the expreſs declarations of CHRIST himſelf, that his kingdom is of this world, and that it began immediately after his firſt coming; tho he

he fixed the commencement of it at his ſecond coming, the time of which he left uncertain. There are many dark paſſages in the goſpels, and when there are no others relative to any particular ſubject, the preſumption of theology has a full ſcope. But when there are paſſages, the ſenſe of which is determined and plain, theſe are to guide us to the ſenſe of thoſe that are ambiguous and obſcure. To take a contrary method, to explain and pretend to fix the ſenſe of what is clear by what is dark, may be called ſubtilty and deep penetration; but, ſure I am, it deſerves to be called abſurd and impudent impoſition. This now is the very thing that has been done in the caſe before us. Divines of all ages, all countries, and ſects, have done it. They do it ſtill: and BEZA and BELLARMINE, who agreed in nothing elſe, agreed in this.

I MENTION BEZA particularly, becauſe he inferred, as I learn from HOBBES, that the commencement of the kingdom of God ſhould be placed at the reſurrection of CHRIST, from a paſſage in the Goſpel of MARK. In that, the words JESUS is recorded to have ſpoken are theſe: "Verily I ſay "unto you, that there be ſome of them who ſtand "here, which ſhall not taſte of death till they "have ſeen the kingdom of God come with "power." Theſe words, like thoſe which he ſpoke of St. JOHN to St. PETER, "If I will that "he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" are very dark indeed. They plainly relate to his ſecond

cond coming, which is characteriſed by coming with power. But then it will follow that the perſons ſpoken of are ſtill alive; which might have paſſed among the good people of Epheſus, who believed, in St. AUSTIN's time, that St. JOHN was ſtill alive, and only ſlept in his grave: and would not paſs, I preſume, in theſe days. Shall we accept the conjecture of HOBBES? He thinks that the words related to the transfiguration, of which PETER and JAMES and JOHN, ſome, not all, who ſtood by JESUS when he ſpoke them, were witneſſes. He thinks that theſe diſciples, having ſeen CHRIST in glory and majeſty, as he is to appear at his ſecond coming, the promiſe was accompliſhed by way of viſion. But this is conjecture only, and, tho ingenious, yet forced, and certainly not ſerious; for if theſe diſciples did ſee him, they ſaw him in a viſion, and they neither ſaw him come, nor the kingdom of God come, in any propriety of ſpeech. There might be a more probable account given, perhaps, why theſe words were ſpoken, according to the natural and obvious ſenſe of them. But I uſe none of the theological liberties of gueſs with holy writ, and I content myſelf to obſerve on this occaſion the abſurdity of that of BEZA. HOBBES takes notice juſtly that if the kingdom of God was to come, and did come at the reſurrection, the expreſſion was not exact, ſince all the diſciples, not ſome only, lived till CHRIST was riſen from the dead. But the abſurdity of this interpretation is greater ſtill. The aſcenſion followed ſoon the reſurrection. Between theſe two events, CHRIST aſſumed

aſſumed no more dominion than he had done before, nor ſhewed any more ſigns of claiming or exerciſing kingly power. He ſcarce ſhewed himſelf to the few, who were ſaid to have ſeen him, in ſuch a manner as they could know by it, certainly, that it was he whom they had ſeen. I ſay the few, becauſe St. PAUL, who had not probably ever ſeen JESUS, deſerves no credit when he affirms, againſt the whole tenor of the goſpels, that he and above five hundred brethren at once had ſeen him after his reſurrection. Both theſe events, the reſurrection and aſcenſion, paſſed in a very private manner. There were no eye-witneſſes, properly called ſo, of his reſurrection. There were few, of his aſcenſion. But in whatever manner we can ſuppoſe them to have paſſed, if we ſuppoſe him to have riſen from the dead, and to have aſcended into heaven, with the ſame public pomp and majeſty with which he is to be attended when he ſhall come to judge the world, and to eſtabliſh the kingdom he foretold; yet we cannot aſſert that this kingdom came, or began at that time. As God, he reigns eternally: but the kingdom here ſpoken of was to have a beginning; and to ſay that it began when CHRIST, who had not then eſtabliſhed it, returned to reign with his Father in the unity of the godhead; or that it came, tho we continue ſtill to pray that it may come, when CHRIST left the earth, or that he veſted the apoſtles, or thoſe who call themſelves their ſucceſſors, with a ſovereignty in this imaginary kingdom, which he never aſſumed himſelf, is one of thoſe paradoxes, which

which men, who find a color for any in the dark ſayings of the ſcriptures, preſume to advance.

MANY other paradoxes have been built on this, the common foundation of all eccleſiaſtical power: and it has happened in the courſe of theſe uſurpations, as it has happened often in the courſe of others: Whilſt the whole body of the clergy purſued, on one general maxim, an intereſt of ambition common to the whole body, particular members invented other paradoxes, which ſeemed to ariſe out of the firſt, and which became maxims juſt as true as the firſt. Thus, that I may ſay in few words what I mean to ſay, and not to deſcend into a long detail of particulars, eccleſiaſtical, as well as civil, democracies became ariſtocracies; ariſtocracies became monarchies; and ſeveral monarchies were united into one empire under thoſe great conquerors, the biſhops of Rome. The chriſtian church bore ſome reſemblance, after the eſtabliſhment of it, to the ſtate of antient Greece. Both were compoſed of ſeveral little governments. They were all Greeks in one, and all Chriſtians in the other; but the quarrels of parties in each of theſe, as well as the quarrels of one government with another, deſtroyed the public peace; and continued to do ſo notwithſtanding all the judgments of the areopagus, and all the decrees of councils. The feuds that aroſe in particular churches gave occaſion or pretence to the inſtitution of biſhops: and thoſe that aroſe between church and church, to the inſtitution of metropolitans, primates, and

patriarchs, one of whom pretended at laſt to be the vicar of CHRIST in his imaginary kingdom. In ſhort, the clergy, like other uſurpers, in order to maintain the advantages they had gained over the laity, or to carry their arms abroad in ſearch of more, have found it neceſſary to ſubmit to uſurpations within their own body, and to groan under the very yoke they impoſed.

EVERY innovation has been ſupported by ſome new paradox: and divine right has been claimed by all, on that fundamental paradox, in which they all agree. MARCHMONT will tell you that preſbytery is jure divino: I ſhall tell you that epiſcopacy is ſo: and tho you are not a very good papiſt, you will tell us that popery is ſo. Let us be candid, and confeſs that none of them are ſo. To ſet an example of candor, I will own that as monſtrous as the papal pretenſions are, againſt which we proteſtants exclaim ſo loudly, they may be ſupported, by wreſting and torturing the ſcriptures, juſt as well as the principles in which we agree, that the chriſtian church is actually the kingdom of CHRIST, and that a religious ſociety was inſtituted to govern in it by his authority. Theſe principles are laid in direct oppoſition to the plaineſt and moſt poſitive declarations which the ſaviour made. But when they are once admitted, BELLARMINE and the other writers for the church and court of Rome are able to defend their monſtrous pretenſions ſo plauſibly to well diſpoſed minds, that, inſtead of contradicting the ſcriptures, they

they ſeem to build upon them; not only on paſſages in the epiſtles of St. PAUL, who boaſted that he was the architect of the ſpiritual houſe, and that he laid the foundations of it, but on the words of CHRIST as they ſtand in ſome paſſages of the Goſpels; and, to make their work the more ſure, as they imagine abſurdly enough, on paſſages of the Old Teſtament, as well as of the New. Thus they prove the popes, as ſucceſſors of St. PETER, to be vicars of CHRIST, to be infallible in all their judgments concerning faith and manners, and to have the ſupreme ſpiritual, and even temporal, power in every chriſtian country. Such are the real pretenſions of your church over all civil power, over all emperors, kings, and princes. Such ſaints as your angelical doctor, ſuch writers as BELLARMINE and BARONIUS, have affirmed them. Councils have held the ſame language: and all they, who would take the temporal ſword out of the hands of St. PETER, have been branded with hereſy, the hereſy of the politics, "haereſis politicorum." True it is that ſome of your doctors, and even ſome councils, have ſeen the folly, and bluſhed at the impudence of thoſe who have carried theſe pretenſions in favor of the papal authority ſo high. Many have writ againſt them, even in Italy: but both ſides have concurred in giving to the church, underſtanding by the church the eccleſiaſtical order alone, a full and independent power over the ſtate in ſpirituals; by which they ſaw that they might preſerve indirectly a tyranny they could not obtain directly.

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SECTION XXXV.

FROM the time of CONSTANTINE to that of CHARLES the great, the wealth and power of the church had grown from age to age, by ſuch means as have been already mentioned: and the authority of that of Rome particularly began to overtop all others, by a ſtupid bigotry that increaſed as ignorance increaſed, and by the artifices which her biſhops employed. But CHARLES the great raiſed theſe biſhops to that exorbitant power and grandeur which enabled them to vex and oppreſs ſome of his own ſucceſſors, and to tyranniſe the whole weſtern world: till in the reign of another CHARLES, ſeveral nations ſhook this yoke off their necks, and made it ſit lighter on the necks of thoſe who did not ſhake it off. When the Lombards had ſettled themſelves in Italy, the popes began to play a game, which they could not play with the ſame advantage, for many reaſons, in the reigns of the gothic kings. They fomented continual quarrels between the exarchs who governed for the conſtantinopolitan emperors, and the Lombards, in order to make their profit of them againſt both: and when they had drawn themſelves into diſtreſs and danger, their refuge for protection was to France. They apprehended leſs the emperors, whoſe government was weak and oppreſſive, deſpiſed therefore and hated, and who were at a greater diſtance from Italy, and careleſs enough about it. They excommunicated the exarchs,

and, in the diſpute about image-breaking, the emperor himſelf. GREGORY the ſecond and the third took advantage of this pretended hereſy; and in their zeal for images, which ſuited the humor of the times and the prejudices of the people, the firſt of theſe popes took upon him to forbid not only in his own dioceſe, but every where elſe, that the orders of LEO the Iſaurian ſhould be obeyed: and the ſecond excommunicated him, and abſolved his ſubjects from their allegiance to him. Uſurpation was ſoon added to revolt, and the people of Rome were made to ſwear allegiance to the popes. CHARLES MARTEL had abetted theſe ambitious and turbulent prelates againſt the emperor: and, when they were in danger from the Lombards, he ſaved them by the influence he had on LUITPRAND. But, CHARLES MARTEL dead, Ravenna taken, and the exarchate conquered, they lay at the mercy of this people, who knew their double dealing, and had ſufficient reaſon to complain of the conduct they held in the revolt of THRASIMOND duke of Spoletto, and on other occaſions. This might have defeated all their deſigns; and the power they had acquired might have been cruſhed under that of the Lombards, if they had not improved very dexterouſly a ſingular conjuncture to ruin the Lombards in their turn, and to finiſh on theſe ruins that ſtately edifice of ſpiritual and temporal grandeur, which they had advanced very far on thoſe of their antient maſters the emperors.

WHEN PEPIN the ſhort reſolved to take the ti-

tle, as he had the power, of king of the Franks, he thought it neceſſary, not only to remove all ſcruples from the minds of his people, who might eſteem themſelves bound by their oaths to CHILDERIC and the merovingian race, but to juſtify his new title to other chriſtian nations. He might have done the firſt, perhaps, by ſome ſolemn farce, which his own clergy would have been ready enough to act. But to do both more effectually he choſe to have the farce acted at Rome. He ſent his meſſengers to queſtion the oracle: and ZACHARY gave the beſt reaſon, that ever pope, or oracle, gave for the ſentence he pronounced. He pronounced that the French were no longer bound by their oaths to CHILDERIC, ſince this prince had not kept his engagement to them. The reaſon followed the ſentence; for "ſuch is the nature of conditional contracts, ſaid ZACHARY, "that if one party fails, the other is abſolved from "his promiſe *." This anſwer had a full effect. PEPIN was choſen king, and CHILDERIC depoſed unanimouſly, in the national aſſembly that was held at Soiſſons.

IF his holineſs was not paid before hand, as antient oracles were moſt commonly, ZACHARY foreſaw that the time of payment would ſoon come, and he took the beſt method to ſecure it. He was at peace with the Lombards when he ſolved this famous caſe of conſcience in favor of PEPIN; but as ſoon as they had conquered Ra-

* MEZERAY.

venna and the Pentapolis, for Italy had a Pentapolis too, ASTOLPHUS their king determined that the popes, who had been ſubject to the emperors, ſhould be ſubject to him. The good men, who had revolted from their antient maſter, did not care to ſubmit to a new power, the ſeat of which was in Italy, and which would be always at hand to keep them in awe, to control, and to puniſh them. STEPHEN the third was not aſhamed to apply for help to CONSTANTINE, the ſon of that very LEO, who had been treated ſo inſolently by the two GREGORIES. But, the emperor having as little concern for the church and people of Rome as they deſerved from him, STEPHEN did at laſt, what ZACHARY, more able than he, would have done at firſt; he had recourſe to PEPIN. He was received in France with more than reſpect, with a ridiculous, and yet in thoſe circumſtances a wiſe, appearance of veneration, if it be true that PEPIN and his ſons threw themſelves at the feet of the prieſt to receive his bleſſing. He conjured them, in eccleſiaſtical cant, to defend the church of Rome, and the ſepulchres of the apoſtles, that is, the dominion and ſovereignty which the popes had uſurped, againſt the Lombards. The Lombards were Chriſtians, and meaned no hurt to the religion they profeſſed. But the cauſe of the clergy and the cauſe of religion were made, by the logic of thoſe times, as well as of ours, the ſame, when they were quite diſtinct, and even when they were oppoſite. PEPIN was glad to ſeiſe an opportunity of ſatisfying, at once, his own ambition and that

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of the roman biſhops. STEPHEN anointed him, his wife, and his children; declared them, after this holy unction, princes by the grace of God; thundered out excommunications againſt all perſons, ſubjects or ſtrangers, who ſhould oppoſe them in any time to come, and confined CHILDERIC on the ſame day to a monaſtery, as he confined the children of CARLOMAN, PEPIN's brother. PEPIN made two expeditions into Italy, reduced the Lombards, uſurped on them the exarchate they had uſurped on the Greeks, and gave it to St. PETER: ſuch was the ſtyle.

CHARLES made ſeveral of theſe expeditions, and in them an abſolute conqueſt of the Lombards. He confirmed what his father had done, and did ſtill more, for the church. He gave the exarchate and the five cities to the roman ſee moſt certainly; but it is as certain that he did not make an abſolute alienation of them, without any reſerve of ſovereignty over the pope and them. His grant of Mantua, of Parma, of the two Sicilies, and of other dominions, is a mere ſuppoſition, and as ill founded as the pretended donation of CONSTANTINE to SYLVESTER and the biſhops of Rome. If this has ſucceeded a little more to their advantage than the other, one reaſon of this ſucceſs may be found, I think, in the paſſages of the time we ſpeak of here. Whatever pope forged the donation of CONSTANTINE, I incline to think that it was forged long before the tenth century, and that it lay dormant, among other records as au-

thentic as itſelf, till an opportunity of employing it to ſome pious uſe was found. Thus it might be employed as an inducement to PEPIN to make, and as a juſtification of him for making, a grant of the exarchate to the ſee of Rome, without any regard to the rightful claim of the greek emperor: and in this ſenſe I chuſe to underſtand thoſe who have called this grant a reſtitution, as if PEPIN, when he ſeemed to give, did only compound with the popes, who had as good a right, as forgery could communicate, to the whole weſtern empire.

IN this pretended act, CONSTANTINE is made to declare his intention to be, not only that the ſee of Rome ſhould have the ſupremacy over thoſe of Alexandria, Antioch, Jeruſalem, and Conſtantinople; but that the pontifical throne ſhould be exalted glorioufly above the imperial *. He is made to give the palace of Lateran, his diadem, and all his imperial ornaments, to SYLVESTER and the popes his ſucceſſors. He is made to conſtitute the inferior clergy, "romanae eccleſiae ſervientes," in the ranks of patricians and conſuls. In ſhort, he is made to ſay in expreſs terms, that he yields and abandons to SYLVESTER, the univerſal pope, and the pontiffs his ſucceſſors, the city of Rome and all the provinces, places, and towns of Italy, or the occidental regions †: and that for this reaſon he

* Amplius quam noſtrum imperium terrenumque thronum ſedem ſacratiſſimam B. PETRI glorioſe exaltare.

† Contradentes et relinquentes univerſali papae romanam urbem, et omnes Italiae ſeu occidentalium regionum provincias, loca, et civitates.

thinks

thinks it, "congruum," proper to transfer his empire into the eaſt; ſince it is not juſt that an earthly emperor ſhould reign where the prince of prieſts, and the head of the chriſtian religion is eſtabliſhed by the emperor of heaven *.

I HAVE quoted this extraordinary piece a little the more at large, becauſe it has been avowed genuine by the court of Rome, and has been publiſhed as ſuch by one of the LEOS; for which reaſon it may ſtand very properly here as an inſtance of the moſt impudent forgery, which the religious ſociety ever attempted to impoſe on the civil, and may render all that remains to be ſaid of theſe forgeries and uſurpations the more probable. I know that BARONIUS gives it up, and would fain perſuade mankind that this act was forged by the Greeks to caſt a reproach on the roman church. I know too that he gives up the decretal epiſtles: and I do not ſuppoſe that there is any man who would have the front at this time to defend either. But theſe candid acknowledgments come too late, to ſave the honor of Rome. Her advocates defended both as long, as they could impoſe on ignorant ages. Nay they attempted it even after the reſurrection of letters. When theſe impoſitions could paſs no longer, and when they had done the work they were deſigned to do, they were abandoned, as many other forged acts and falſe traditions

* Quoniam ubi principatus ſacerdotum et chriſtianae religionis caput ab imperatore coeleſti conſtitutum eſt, juſtum non eſt ut illic terrenus imperator habeat poteſtatem.

have been. But are men, who confeſs perjury when they are convicted of it, to be received as good witneſſes in any caſe? I think not: and therefore I inſiſt that the forgery of the donation, as well as that of the decretals, ſince theſe have been mentioned too, may ſtand as proofs of the little credit we ought to give to any of thoſe that are brought in juſtification of the papal pretenſions to temporal or ſpiritual rights.

THESE rights have in truth no better foundation than the compact I have mentioned between princes and prieſts. It began under CONSTANTINE, but it never appeared ſo groſsly as under PEPIN and CHARLES the great. On which occaſion it may be worth while to obſerve how much a worſe bargain CONSTANTINE made with the church, than the others made with the pope. What CONSTANTINE gave was immediate and real. The returns he had to expect were future, and ſuch as never anſwered his expectations either in his own time, or in that of his ſucceſſors, either in promoting the grandeur, or in ſecuring the peace, of the empire. The emperor was the bubble of this bargin. That which PEPIN and CHARLES the great made with the church, already eſtabliſhed and powerful, was better, and in ſome degree the reverſe of the other. Their advantages in this alliance were immediate, as well as thoſe of the pope; and who ſhould improve them moſt was left to the ſkill and management of their ſucceſſors. In the mean while, if they could not cheat

cheat one another, they bantered the reſt of the world egregiouſly. The pope gave the title of king to PEPIN, and that of emperor to CHARLES. Theſe princes gave temporal dominion to the pope, and raiſed the opinion of his ſpiritual dignity and authority as high, as the examples they affected to give of reverence and ſubmiſſion could raiſe it. Thus, by fortifying his uſurpations, they ſtrengthened their own: and whilſt we admire the conqueſts whereby CHARLES extended his empire and that of the pope together, it is impoſſible not to laugh when we figure to ourſelves the two uſurpers kneeling to one another, the emperor aſking the bleſſing of a man he made head of the church, the pope acknowledging the imperial ſovereignty in a man he made head of the empire, and each beſtowing moſt generouſly what neither of them had any right to give.

As theſe alliances were made on principles of human policy, and dictated by private intereſt alone, they were kept accordingly. CHARLES the great ſeemed to foreſee that the alliance he had made would not be very well obſerved, and that the church would find means to tranſgreſs, inſtead of keeping within, the bounds of it. He had received his crown from the pope; but he was ſo afraid that future popes might claim from this precedent, ſtrained to their purpoſe, a right to give it, that he would not ſuffer any prelate to ſet it on the head of his ſon, who was elected and crowned in his preſence at Aix. He ordered

ed LEWIS to take it from the altar, and to crown himſelf. But LEWIS profited ill of this leſſon. Even in his reign, the popes, who felt their ſtrength, began to improve every opportunity of extending their prerogatives by encroachments on thoſe that belonged to the emperors. Thus, for inſtance, a LEO preſumed, under the pretence of a conſpiracy againſt himſelf, to condemn capitally ſome perſons without the imperial authority. The matter was examined, but the pope was not cenſured, he was rather ſcreened by the imperial court, as we may preſume from the extreme reſentment which the people of Rome ſhewed after his death, and from all the indignities they offered to his memory. Thus again, a PASCHAL ſeiſed on ſome of the principal men of Rome, officers of the emperor, and free from any crime but that of maintaining the imperial rights. He ordered their eyes to be put out; their hands and feet, and after theſe their heads, to be cut off, in the Lateran palace. An army was ſent to Rome to puniſh this uſurpation of power and exceſs of cruelty. His holineſs purged himſelf of the crime by oath. But his holineſs was forſworn, and, having eſcaped the puniſhment, did not ſeem concerned to conceal the perjury; for he declared afterwards that the perſons he had cauſed to be executed were guilty of high treaſon, which he muſt have underſtood to be high treaſon againſt himſelf; and abſolved the murtherers becauſe they were of St. PETER's family. All this and more that weak prince the Debonnaire endured

ed from the popes, who came to ſuch a pitch of power and inſolence, by the bigotry of the age, and by the advantage they took of the troubles which aroſe in the empire, that, in the ſecond generation after CHARLEMAGNE, CHARLES the bald was obliged to purchaſe the empire of the pope by very great conceſſions. He quitted all right to juriſdiction in Rome, and the country about it; and inſtead of reſerving to himſelf that of making the election of popes valid by the imperial confirmation, he is ſaid to have yielded that of creating and of crowning emperors to the pope.

SECTION XXXVI.

AN univerſal and public diſſolution of manners, into which the clergy in general had fallen, might have brought diſgrace on the whole order, ſufficient even in thoſe ages to have opened the eyes of the laity, to have ſtopped their profuſe charity to the church, and to have converted their blind ſubmiſſion into a juſt indignation. But, beſides the favorable circumſtance already mentioned, that apparent ſanctity of the few which ſerved to ſcreen the vices of the many, it is true that this diſſolution of manners received ſome checks from time to time. One of theſe I will point out. The ſynod, or the aſſembly of the ſtates, for it conſiſted of laity and clergy both, which was held at Aix in the reign of the Debonnaire, made ſome reformation in convents, where the debauchery was ſcandalous beyond all meaſure.

ſure. Rules were eſtabliſhed of ſtricter diſcipline for monks and nuns, and the epiſcopal order was reſtrained from ſome exceſſes. Biſhops were forbid to adorn their habits with gold and jewels, to wear ſwords and belts, to dreſs in ſcarlet, and to make war. I am far from believing that new conſtitutions made, or old ones renewed, had an entire effect, or produced a real reformation: but they might ſave ſome of the worſt appearances; which was enough for a church wherein a ſpirit of policy, not a ſpirit of religion, prevailed. Thus much too might be eaſily brought about, when the exerciſes of true piety were changed into ſuperſtitious practices; when it coſt ſo little to be a good biſhop, a good prieſt, a good monk, or a great ſaint, that it was neceſſary rather to diſguiſe, than to reſtrain, their paſſions; and when theſe men could acquire ſuch holy characters by no greater merit than this, and even make themſelves amends for diſguiſing or reſtraining ſome of their paſſions by indulging others. Pride, revenge, avarice, and ambition, had only their names to change, and their effects were conſecrated with the greateſt applauſe. It is eaſy to conceive too, that theſe vices of the mind were purſued with greater application, and by more perſons in the common cauſe of the church, when ſenſuality and debauchery were a little more reſtrained; and that this kind of reformation, inſtead of making the clergy better men, made them only more dangerous enemies of the ſtate.

LAYMEN aſſiſted to reform the clergy without much ſucceſs, churchmen continued to encroach on the laity with great ſucceſs, and the breach of that alliance which PEPIN and his ſon CHARLES the great had lately made between the imperial and papal power, as CONSTANTINE had made one before between the monarchy and the hierarchy, grew wider and wider, and diſturbed the whole chriſtian world. It could not happen otherwiſe, when once the biſhops of Rome had reſolved to be monarchs as well as the emperors, their rivals at leaſt, perhaps their maſters; and when they had acquired ſtrength ſufficient, which they were not long in acquiring, to make theſe attempts. Examples may be produced of churchmen, and aſſemblies of churchmen, who have oppoſed, on ſome few occaſions, the moſt violent exceſſes of papal tyranny. The particular motives they had are not always developed in hiſtory. But particular and temporary motives, ariſing from particular conjunctures, they muſt have had, whenever they held ſuch a conduct. Tho they had ſome dependance ſtill on princes, even when the popes were grown bold enough to claim and exerciſe over theſe a moſt exorbitant power, yet their dependance on the pope was double whereever his ſupremacy was eſtabliſhed; which I preſume to have been the caſe in all the chriſtian countries of the weſt ſoon after the end of the eighth century. Princes had it in their power to ſhew favor, in many reſpects, and to deal out

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ſome degrees and kinds of puniſhment to the members of the religious ſociety, as we have accuſtomed ourſelves in this eſſay to call the clergy. The popes had their ſhare of this influence too; and their ſhare was, on the whole, the greateſt. But there was another influence, ariſing from another intereſt, which centered in them alone.

Of this influence princes could have no ſhare; for it aroſe from an intereſt contrary to theirs. Princes and prieſts had agreed in encroaching on the rights of the civil ſociety, according to the true ſpirit of their alliance, whilſt the government of the church was ariſtocratical. But when it became monarchical the ſcene was changed. The groundleſs diſtinction between ſpiritual and temporal power had been long eſtabliſhed, and had taken full poſſeſſion of the minds of men. The former had been exerciſed from the time of Constantine, with no ſmall confuſion, by different churches in different countries; and in all with much dependance on the civil power, and a real ſubordination to it. But Charles the great did, in effect and in conſequence, unite the diſperſed powers of the weſtern church under one direction, and raiſe the pope from an ecumenical biſhop, with limited and diſputed prerogatives, to be a ſpiritual emperor, with a large ſhare of temporal dominion. This new eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, for ſuch it may be truly called, which he made, or to which he gave occaſion, might be

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of immediate advantage in many reſpects of ambition to himſelf. But this, like many other temporary expedients, proved fatal in it's conſequences. As the diviſion of the Lombards into ſeveral dukedoms weakened their power, and prepared the way to the deſtruction of it; ſo the union of all the churches of the weſt under one head ſtrengthened eccleſiaſtical power, and prepared the way to all the conqueſts it made. As ſoon as the religious ſociety had an emperor of their own order at their head, the ſucceſſors of CHARLES had no longer a prevailing influence over them. They thought it no longer neceſſary to keep fair with thoſe princes, to help them, and to be helped by them, in plundering and ſubduing the civil ſociety, as they had done before. They affected independency on all authority that was not eccleſiaſtical; and hoped to obtain, by conquering the emperors themſelves under the papal banners, much greater advantages than thoſe they had obtained already by their alliance with the imperial authority.

THE conteſts which the popes, ſupported by this ſpirit in the clergy, raiſed, under the immediate ſucceſſors of CHARLES the great, continued during the courſe of many ages, and brought infinite miſchief, as well as diſgrace, on chriſtianity, that was not anſwerable for either. The points in diſpute were few, but they were very important: and to ſuffer a deciſion of them in favor of the popes, was nothing leſs than to acknow-

knowledge their ſovereignty in every chriſtian ſtate, as well as their ſupremacy in every chriſtian church. The emperors conferred benefices, and inveſted the prelates by the ſtaff and the ring. The election of the popes themſelves, how much ſoever they had been raiſed above all other biſhops, was ſo far from being independent on the emperors, that it was not reputed valid till it had been confirmed by them; nor did they confirm it till the perſon elected had taken an oath of ſubmiſſion and obedience to them. One of theſe prerogatives was neceſſary to maintain that ſhare of influence which they had left themſelves over the clergy in their own dominions, and the other to check the farther growth of that monarchical power which they had helped, as well as ſuffered, the popes to aſſume in the church, and which the eccleſiaſtics were but too ready in every place to abet; for the biſhops did not ſeem to perceive, either time enough, or ſtrongly enough, what chains they were preparing for themſelves. Both the prerogatives were the more neceſſary to be maintained, ſince CHARLES the great had thrown ſo immenſe a ſhare of temporal power into the hands of the prelates, as well as of the popes, by the earldoms, baronies, and other eſtates of much authority, as well as dignity, in the empire, which he gave them. Beſides which, it is to be conſidered that if any of the power, which the emperors exerciſed in the inveſtitures, was uſurped, it was uſurped on the chriſtian congregations, not on the popes: and if the popes had

had uſurped this power out of the empire, in Britain, and elſewhere, the emperors might very well think it too much to ſuffer, that they ſhould profit of their own uſurpations, and of thoſe which had been made by others. As to the ſuperiority of the imperial over the pontifical authority in general, it had not only been acknowledged in the days of heathen emperors and heretic princes, ſuch as the gothic kings were, but it had been exerciſed by the greek emperors in matters of doctrine as well as diſcipline, and had been recogniſed moſt ſolemnly in the days of CHARLEMAGNE, in every reſpect of dominion and diſcipline at leaſt. Many authentic monuments proved the acknowledgment: and the recognition of the imperial ſovereignty was ſo recent when the popes began to ſhake it off, that, as no impudence leſs than that of the court of Rome could deny it, no ingratitude leſs than that of the popes could forget ſo ſoon, to whoſe favor they owed much of their ſpiritual, and all their temporal, grandeur.

SECTION XXXVII.

THUS the cauſe of the emperors ſtood, whilſt that of the popes was founded on nothing better than aſſumption, forgery, and the moſt barefaced uſurpation. They aſſumed and their advocates aſſume ſtill, that CHRIST eſtabliſhed a kingdom when he was on earth. They call it his church, and play with the ambiguity of the word: for when they mean to ſpeak of the ſuppoſed ac-

tual kingdom of CHRIST on earth, the word church ſignifies the whole body of chriſtian people: and when they mean to ſpeak of the governors, or government, of this ſuppoſed kingdom, the ſame word is uſed to ſignify the whole eccleſiaſtical order, with the pope at the head of it. To ſay in plain terms that CHRIST eſtabliſhed a religion, a rule of faith and manners, the conformity or nonconformity to which is to be rewarded or puniſhed by CHRIST himſelf in another life, and that he commiſſioned certain men to preach it, and to commiſſion others to preach it, would not lay a foundation ſufficient for the immenſe building that has been erected, and is ſtill kept up, tho it has tottered long. They were glad at firſt to found their primacy on an imperial reſcript. But they ſoon aſſumed that CHRIST inſtituted a ſovereign pontiff to govern this church or kingdom; that this pontiff was PETER the prince of his apoſtles; and that he did this agreeably to all laws divine and human; nay that he would not have ſhewn common diſcretion, if he had neglected to leave ſuch a vicar behind him as might execute all his own powers. They aſſume that the popes are the ſucceſſors of PETER, that they have all his powers as he had CHRIST's, and are, as he was, the vicars of CHRIST *. They aſſume

* Quod divino et humano jure ita ſemper factum reperiretur, CHRISTUM ſuorum apoſtolorum principem conſtituiſſe PETRUM. This is cited by CASAUBON in his fifteenth Exercit. on BARONIUS. Omnis poteſtas mihi data eſt in coelo et in terra. MATT. xxviii. 18. This is the text. The papal com-

aſſume a multitude of other things, relative to theſe, which it is unneceſſary I ſhould ſtay to enumerate. Now of theſe aſſumptions, which are the principal, every man is a competent judge who can read the goſpels; for we muſt own that no powers, like thoſe which are aſſumed, can belong to the church now, nor could belong to the apoſtles themſelves, unleſs they are evidently contained therein: or elſe we muſt beg the queſtion moſt abſurdly, as our proteſtant writers, and the leaſt papal of yours, ſuch as Du Pin and Giannone, that I may quote a lawyer as well a a divine, have done. They ſuppoſed that Christ eſtabliſhed a ſociety diſtinct from the civil, in every ſociety where his religion ſhould be received, by the commiſſion given to his apoſtles and diſciples. Let us ſuppoſe this to be true, for the ſake of argument. Let us ſuppoſe, in conſequence of it, that this ſociety had a power to make laws for it's own advantage and better government, provided theſe laws did not diſturb the eſtabliſhed order of the ſtate, as every other particular and lawful ſociety has by common right according to them, but not according to truth in ſo great a latitude. When all this is yielded to them, all that will follow is, that ſuch a ſociety had a power of making by-laws to which all the members of it, that is, all eccleſiaſtics, were ſubject, and they alone. I ſay eccleſiaſtics alone, that the

commentary follows. Non videretur Dominus diſcretus fuiſſe, ut cum reverentia ejus loquar, niſi unicum poſt ſe talem vicarium reliquiſſet, qui haec omnia poſſet. Vid. auctorem gloſſar. in extrav. Unam ſanctam.

church ſophiſts may not impoſe on us by an equivocal uſe of terms, nor employ the word church in one ſenſe, in one part of their argumentation, and in another ſenſe, in another. If they ſay, and they do ſay, that the legiſlative power ſpoken of was given to the religious ſociety, excluſively of the civil, their argument drawn from the rights of particular ſocieties is good as far as their ſociety is concerned. But if they ſay, and they do ſay, that the civil ſociety of Chriſtians was and is ſubject to theſe laws, they beg the queſtion, and they grow abſurd. The compariſon is no longer juſt, nor the argument good; for tho it be granted that the by-laws of a particular ſociety may govern that ſociety, it is denied that they can be laws to the whole community. Laws to the whole community, no power, that is not the ſovereign power in that community, can preſcribe. I know that the trite diſtinction between ſpiritual and temporal is always at hand. But I aſk, is this power coercive or not? If it be not ſo, a power, which begins and ends in ſpirituality, cannot be very dangerous nor oppreſſive. But if it be coercive, they may call it ſpiritual as long as they pleaſe; it is what I juſt now ſaid, the power of a particular ſociety to make laws, not for themſelves alone, but for the whole community: and, as much as the church advocates endeavour to diſguiſe the abſurdity, and to evade the conſequences, this is what they mean.

If this was not their meaning, to what purpoſe ſhould

ſhould they inſiſt ſo much, or at all indeed, on the great ſuperiority of the clergy, as a more holy order over the laity, and of ſpiritual power and dignity, over the temporal? This they have all done from CYPRIAN, firſt a magician, and afterwards a father of the chriſtian church, down to that learned bigot DODWELL, who wrote diſſertations on him. This they do even in this country, and at this hour, as openly as they dare: for let us not be deceived by the low cunning and diſſimulation of ſome. Whoever aſſerts that the eccleſiaſtical order is of divine inſtitution, and by that inſtitution independent of the ſtate, whatever alliance this order may think fit to ſuppoſe has been made with it, ſays in effect all that they ſay who ſpeak more openly, more honeſtly, and more conſiſtently. GIANNONE, who writ at Naples, carries theſe notions ſo far, that he lies open to ridicule in this particular, how reſpectable an author ſoever he be in general. He quotes CICERO to ſhew that, in the roman commonwealth, they who preſided over the affairs of the ſtate preſided over thoſe of religion, by a cuſtom derived from their forefathers; and that nothing is more worthy of princes and men, diſtinguiſhed by their knowledge in human affairs, than to be ſo likewiſe by their knowledge of thoſe that are divine. He ſays that the two characters of king and prieſt were united often in heathen governments: but that, the chriſtian religion propoſing a much more noble object than the mere proſperity of ſtates and the public tranquillity, the dig-

nity of the prieſthood among Chriſtians is ſeparated from the imperial dignity, and raiſed as much above it as things divine are above things human, as the ſoul is more noble than the body, and as eternal happineſs is preferable to that of this life. He tells us afterwards that, notwithſtanding this wide difference, the two characters may be united in the ſame perſon, by an acceſſion of the temporal to the ſpiritual dignity, not by any acceſſion of the ſpiritual to the temporal. The reaſon he gives is, becauſe eccleſiaſtical dignity, being the greateſt, cannot become an acceſſion to, or a dependance on, the leaſt; whereas the leaſt may be in that relation to the greateſt: and thus you ſee that a prieſt may ſtoop to the exerciſe of regal power, but a king cannot be raiſed up to the exerciſe of eccleſiaſtical, no, not to that of a country curate.

If a man of as much knowledge and as little bigotry, as this hiſtorian, could publiſh to the world, for I do not think he believed, ſuch extravagances, in the eighteenth century, we cannot be ſurpriſed that theſe, and greater than theſe, were taught, and piouſly believed too, in the ages of ignorance and ſuperſtition. But if the primitive clergy maintained ſuch notions in ſpeculation, they could not maintain them in practice. They had been ſheep among wolves before Constantine. They were ſheep, under the conduct of ſhepherds, after him: and theſe ſhepherds or principal paſtors were the emperors. They became

came in proceſs of time wolves among ſheep: and emperors themſelves were often the ſheep they preyed upon. It is not only true that the emperors meddled very far in matters of religion, in matters of doctrine, I ſay, as well as of diſcipline; it is not only true that councils were ſummoned by their authority; but it is true likewiſe that the clergy had recourſe to the ſame authority, to confirm their canons, and to give them the force of laws. The nicean canons were confirmed by CONSTANTINE; thoſe of Conſtantinople by THEODOSIUS; thoſe of the council of Chalcedonia by MARCIANUS: and we need go no farther than the theodoſian code, tho we might do ſo, to prove that the by-laws of the religious ſociety acquired the force of laws, even in points of diſcipline that concerned this ſociety alone, by the imperial, not the eccleſiaſtical, authority, and by being inſerted among the imperial conſtitutions. So that not only the ratification of the emperors was neceſſary to the doctrines they taught; but the by-laws they made for the government of their own ſociety were ſubject to the civil power.

IT would not be hard to ſhew, by a multitude of examples, that the church had no more claim allowed in thoſe days to judicial and executive power, nor to the immunities and privileges ſhe enjoyed, than ſhe had to legiſlative power; that is, no more than the emperors allowed her: unleſs we ſhould call the power of excommunication, which I ſuppoſe biſhops exerciſed both be-

fore and after CONSTANTINE with the advice and conſent of their preſbyters alone, wherever they durſt, a part of executive coercive power. But if this may be called executive, it cannot be called coercive. It was a cenſure, it was an excluſion from chriſtian congregations: but this cenſure, and this excluſion, operated on the imagination alone; and the puniſhment being imaginary, the power was ſo too. It was nothing more till the increaſe of eccleſiaſtical, and the concurrence of civil, authority made it more. In ſhort, the power and dignity of the religious ſociety were much higher in ſpeculation and pretenſion, than they were in practice and reality, even for ſome time after the reign of CHARLEMAGNE, as high as this emperor raiſed them. The prelates in general, and the biſhops of Rome in particular, before his time, and in it, made a ſhew of the greateſt meekneſs, and of the greateſt humility and ſubmiſſion to the emperors; tho they were even then in purſuit of the greateſt objects of ambition. The ſucceſſors of that wicked ſaint, GREGORY, continued to take, like him, the title of ſervants of the ſervants of God, at the very time when they ſacrificed all the ſentiments of humanity to the pride of being called ecumenical biſhops; at the very time when they meditated, nay, when they attempted, to be maſters of the maſters of the world. By this hypocritical behaviour, and by that ſilly diſtinction between ſpiritual and temporal power, government of the church, and government of the ſtate, they hinder-

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ed men from taking an alarm that ſhould have been taken ſooner, and their tyranny was eſtabliſhed almoſt before it was perceived.

When the roman biſhops pulled off their maſk, and began to contend openly for power with the emperors, the eccleſiaſtical maxims which had been aſſumed for evangelical truths, and the whole tendency of which had not been diſcerned, became of infinite ſervice to them. Theſe paradoxes could not be proved: but they had been admitted; and the papal pretenſions might be proved, plauſibly enough, to be the neceſſary conſequences of them. Thus it happens often: a few falſe principles, uncautiouſly received, eſtabliſh whole ſyſtems of error: and abſurdity becomes capable of demonſtration. But falſe ſpeculative notions were not employed alone in the cauſe of the papacy. Falſe facts and falſe records were neceſſary; and therefore forgery was added to aſſumption *. Forgery is an hard word, but it muſt be uſed when truth exacts that it ſhould. I ſay then that as it had been employed for holy purpoſes in the early ages

* N. B. Leslie, who was in religion as much a bigot, as in politics, makes a member of the church of England aſſert, in a ſuppoſed dialogue between him and a Roman Catholic, that there were falſe goſpels and falſe epiſtles aſcribed to ſeveral of the apoſtles, ſet up by heretics in the firſt age; that they were detected in that ſame age, whilſt the originals of what the apoſtles wrote were ſtill in being; but that the heretics could not produce the originals of theirs, nor did their copies agree one with another. For all this he quotes Eusebius, and adds, this was not deciding the matter by authority, but by plain evidence of a fact, as of any other forgery, or ſuppoſititious writing.

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of chriſtianity, it was employed, in thoſe we ſpeak of here, for purpoſes very unholy. No man dares deny the firſt: and the advocates of Rome themſelves, BARONIUS and others, are obliged to confeſs the laſt. Fathers were oppoſed to fathers, and councils to councils, about canonical writings; traditions of the weſtern to traditions of the eaſtern churches; and thoſe that were moſt diſtant in time and place, to thoſe that were neareſt in both to the ſource of theſe very traditions. Add to all this, the approved cuſtom of ſpeaking and writing agoniſtically, or with economy, that is, the cuſtom of ſaying one thing and meaning another; which St. JEROM, that great critic and voucher of canonical ſcriptures, avowed, practiſed, and recommended: add this conſideration, I ſay, to the reſt, and you will not be ſurpriſed to hear it advanced, that we know neither why the goſpels, the epiſtles, and the apocalypſe we have, were retained, or rather inſerted in the canon; nor why thoſe we have not were rejected. We are forced to be in this caſe abſolutely implicit: and yet in this caſe, if in any, we ought to have proof that councils proceeded with integrity; ſince there is ſo great reaſon to ſuſpect that the ſpirit of party had as much to do in determining what books ſhould be deemed canonical, as what doctrines ſhould be deemed orthodox.

BUT in the other caſe, we are not obliged to be ſo implicit. If all the canons of antient councils, and every other eccleſiaſtical monument, had remained

mained in the hands of the popes alone, we may aſſure ourſelves that they would have been all corrupted and interpolated, as ſuch writings are more than any others expoſed to be; and that thoſe, which could not be made to ſpeak the language of the roman court, would have been ſuppreſſed. Happily this ſuppreſſion was not practicable in a full extent, many of theſe antient records having been preſerved in other churches: and it is by the help of them that ſo many forgeries have been detected ſince the reſurrection of letters. Some had been detected near a thouſand years ſooner occaſionally, when the popes began firſt and faintly to ſtretch their primacy into a ſupremacy; a flagrant inſtance of which is the pretenſion, that was ſet on foot by one of them early in the fifth century, to a juriſdiction over the churches of Africa. This pretenſion was founded on a forged canon of the nicean council. I ſay forged, becauſe when the african biſhops, and among them St. AUSTIN, had procured an authentic copy of theſe canons from the eaſt, no ſuch canon appeared among them. Other inſtances of occaſional forgery there are; but we may ſay, without exaggeration, that, from the ſeventh century at the lateſt downwards, Rome was a ſtorehouſe of falſe traditions, falſe records, and every kind of forgery that could be of uſe to eſtabliſh the eccleſiaſtical ſupremacy of her biſhops firſt; and, when that was done, their ſuperiority of dignity and juriſdiction over all the other powers of the earth. This fund increaſed continually too, from the ſixth or ſeventh centuries. The more,

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and the more important, the uſurpations of this church were, the more ſuch materials as theſe were wanted: and accordingly we find the times of the great increaſe, and the great want of them, coincide. The firſt decretals were forged, moſt probably, in the ſeventh century: and tho there has been much diſpute, whether the apoſtolical conſtitutions were made by the apoſtles, or by their immediate diſciples, as if it were impoſſible they ſhould be of a later date, yet is it an opinion more probable than either, that they are really no older than the ſixth century.

WHAT has been ſaid in this eſſay may ſerve to ſhew, how little reſpect would be due to the canons of councils, if they were genuine. But how much reaſon have we to neglect and deſpiſe them, when we conſider by whom they were collected, and at what æras theſe collections came into repute; when we add, to the little authority of the canons themſelves, the little credit that the men who collected them, and who corrected and publiſhed them, deſerve! DIONYSIUS, the little ſcythian abbot, made the firſt collection of them, at leaſt the firſt that came into general uſe, in the ſixth century, and at Rome. After the eighth they were mingled up with decrees of popes, and conſtitutions of CHARLEMAGNE, the great inſtrument, as well as patron, of papal uſurpations. The benedictin monk, GRATIAN, made a new collection in the twelfth century, and ſtuffed it with texts of ſcripture, as well as opinions of fathers. Of the former

former we may ſay, properly enough, "non erat "his locus," and of the latter, that they do not deſerve even the name of "reſponſa prudentum." If he was, and I think he was, brother of the maſter of the ſentences, the two brothers eſtabliſhed the two moſt impertinent ſciences that ever puzzled the heads of men, and diſturbed the peace of the world, canon law and ſcholaſtic theology. I ſay nothing of the clementines, nor the extravagants. They were publiſhed when the tyranny of Rome was already confirmed; and are as little to my purpoſe to be mentioned, as the decretals publiſhed by that madman BONIFACE the eighth.

SUCH was the origin of that ſyſtem of law which is called the canon law, and by the prevalence of which the biſhop of one city, and a few ſuburbicarian provinces, invaded and ſubjected to his authority the civil laws of every country, the laws of nations, and the laws of nature themſelves. Many of the decrees of popes, that the monkiſh collectors foiſted into this eccleſiaſtical code, had not been made, very probably, many of them had not been executed, very certainly, at the time, and on the occaſions, pretended; and yet they all acquired, in proceſs of time, a ſuppoſed authenticity, and became precedents alike. Juſt ſo, by an inverſion of all the rules of good criticiſm and of common ſenſe, their other forgeries got into credit. The leaſt of theſe were falſe repreſentations of things true. By them vain ceremonies, which the popes were admitted to perform, and vain compliments, which

which emperors and princes paid them, came in after-ages to paſs for acknowledgments of a right; and preſents that were made them, nay bribes that were given them, for tribute. The greateſt were thoſe groſs lies, and all thoſe fabulous relations which they invented, and propagated, to nouriſh ſuperſtition, or to juſtify uſurpation, which were not only void of all foundation, but often irreconcileable to hiſtory and chronology; and which, however, were repeated till they were believed on the faith of fabulous legends. Thus they builded up a ſovereignty, at all times the moſt abſurd, and for a long time the moſt tyrannical, that had ever been felt over the weſtern world. An uniform ſyſtem of ambition ſteddily and artfully purſued, from one generation to another, through ages of ignorance and ſuperſtition, wherein it was eaſy to impoſe on the underſtandings of men, and to direct their conſciences, eſtabliſhed this tyranny little by little. It grew up faſteſt, from the time it was eſtabliſhed, in the out-ſkirts of the empire, in Britain, and in Spain for inſtance. It grew up leſs in France, and it was reverenced leaſt of all at Rome. The Romans were pleaſed to ſee their city become the ſeat of chimerical, when it was ſo no longer of real, empire. But then they uſed their pontiffs, as they had ſometimes uſed their emperors. They abetted their conqueſts abroad, and treated their perſons ignominiouſly at home. Theſe pontiffs were never more reſpected in foreign nations, than they were at the time when they gave the greateſt ſcandal, and received the greateſt inſults, in Italy. By the

the means and by the conduct that have been mentioned, however, they were able, even in ſuch circumſtances, to aſſert with ſucceſs the moſt exorbitant of their pretenſions againſt the greateſt emperors.

THIS ſucceſs varied indeed on ſome particular occaſions; but on the whole, and in the event, it was in their favor. Thus, that I may quote two examples at leaſt, the firſt OTHO depoſed JOHN the thirteenth, in the tenth century, for debauchery and treaſon; directed and confirmed the election of LEO the eighth; reſtored this pope when he had been expelled from his ſeat by a rival; choſe another, and re-eſtabliſhed the imperial right to grant inveſtitures, and to nominate the biſhops of Rome, which prerogatives had been loſt by the ſucceſſors of CHARLEMAGNE. Thus, on the other hand, GREGORY the ſeventh, in the next century, taking up the conteſt about theſe very prerogatives, which was again on foot, carried it on with ſo much ſucceſs, that, all circumſtances conſidered, by what he effected, and by what he put it in the power of his ſucceſſors to effect, he may be eſteemed a worſe man, and a greater conqueror, than ALEXANDER or CAESAR. In this conteſt, he had the addreſs to gain to his ſide the mother and the aunt of the emperor HENRY the fourth, and to debauch, in every ſenſe of the word, perhaps, his couſin german the counteſs MATHILDA. At leaſt, the manner in which ſhe lived with this dirty monk, and which was not at all neceſſary to the ſupport of a cauſe

ſhe

ſhe might and did affect to favor on a religious principle, juſtifies the accuſation ſufficiently. He made the Saxons revolt: he divided the empire: he excommunicated the emperor and all his adherents over and over: and when he was aſked, by what right he had preſumed to deprive this prince of his crown, and to abſolve the ſubjects of the empire from the allegiance they had ſworn to him; he anſwered that he had done it conformably to cuſtoms and uſages of his predeceſſors *. Such cuſtoms and ſuch uſages, before HILDEBRAND, were entirely unknown to the moſt learned men in former ages, as well as in ours. But HILDEBRAND had precedents ready to alledge: and ſome ſuch are, I believe, mentioned in letters of his writing. How, indeed, ſhould he want them, when Rome was a ſtorehouſe of acts of papal power which were never executed, nor would have been ſuffered at the times when they pretended to have been executed, but were laid up to be produced on future occaſions? This inſtance may ſerve to prove, by the way, therefore, the truth of what is ſaid above; for whether the pope invented theſe fabulous relations himſelf, or whether his ſecretary furniſhed him with falſe documents, as I learn by a note of BAYLE it has been ſuppoſed in his excuſe, theſe lies were coined in the papal mint. To conclude: this emperor, who came, it is ſaid, victorious out of more than ſixty combats, and who had forced his enemy from Rome into an exile, from which he never returned, at Salerno, was de-

* MAIM. Decad. de l'empire.

poſed,

poſed, dethroned, and confined to the priſon where he died, by his ſon HENRY the fifth, whom PASCHAL the ſecond encouraged in his rebellion, and excited to this cruelty.

AFTER the death of HENRY the fourth, the popes completed their uſurpations very ſoon. As they robbed the emperors of the right to confirm their elections, they robbed the clergy and the people of the right to elect them; for it was decreed at Mantua, that the cardinals alone ſhould chuſe the popes. In a council held at Troyes, it was decreed that inveſtitures to benefices belonged to the ſovereign pontiff alone; becauſe religion was polluted, ſaid theſe reverend fathers, when perſons dedicated to the ſervice of the heavenly and immortal King became ſubjects and vaſſals of an earthly and mortal prince. In a council held at Rheims, HENRY the fifth, who had taken up his father's quarrel with the popes, tho he had rebelled in the ſame quarrel againſt his father, was excommunicated: and theſe circumſtances, with others diſcernible enough in hiſtory, determined him to a compoſition. He gave up the right of inveſtitures; for he conſented to hold it by a grant from the pope, and not as an imperial prerogative. He conſented too that this grant ſhould be reſtrained to him perſonally, and that the prerogative ſhould belong ſolely to the ſee of Rome after his deceaſe. The popes were now arrived at that height of power and independency which had been ſo long the object of their ambition. They have main-

tained themſelves in it, as they attained to it, by fomenting rebellions, aſſaſſinations, maſſacres, and by employing ſuperſtition to keep up, in every ſtate, a private conſcience favorable to the eccleſiaſtical, and dangerous to the civil, authority. Such have been the conſequences of an alliance between the monarchy and the hierarchy; for thoſe, who talk of an alliance between the religious and civil ſociety, deſerve only contempt when they affirm with fact and common ſenſe both againſt them: and I believe that, from the days of CHARLES the great to the reformation, no inſtance can be brought of a conteſt between them, wherein the biſhops of Rome have not prevailed in the whole, or in ſome very eſſential points, by the wiſe maxim of obſerving conjunctures, and of puſhing their pretenſions to the utmoſt with violence and inſolence; or of reducing them to terms of real or ſeeming moderation. When conjunctures were favorable, they bullied and uſurped: when theſe were unfavorable, they whined; compoſed, if they could, and, if they could not, ſubmitted. Had the civil powers of Europe ſeen their danger in time, and united againſt it, theſe things could not have happened, nor the chriſtian church have become a perpetual ſource of the greateſt evils to the chriſtian world. But the civil powers were divided, and the popes growing of more and more conſequence, as their dignity and authority increaſed, every ſide was glad to have them: and the ſide that bid moſt, or yielded moſt, was ſure to have them. France had raiſed and protected them:

them; and France afforded a terrible example, even as lately as the ſixteenth century, of her own miſtaken policy in the ninth and following centuries.

NOTWITHSTANDING the great ſucceſs which the popes had, and the ſuperiority they acquired over all chriſtian princes by acquiring it over the emperors, the ſtruggle was hard; the event had been ſometimes doubtful; and it was not very certain that they would be able to maintain the rights they had already uſurped, or to keep the laity in conſtant awe by the thunder of excommunications. To make their work ſure, therefore, they judged it neceſſary to invent ſtill new expedients, and to improve every old one that had ſerved to exalt eccleſiaſtical power and dignity. They did more. They found means to divert the attention of mankind from Europe to Aſia, and to confirm inſenſibly the tyranny they had uſurped, by engaging the princes and ſtates of the weſt to undertake romantic expeditions for extending it into the eaſt. The epidemical madneſs of the croiſades, which ambition, ſuperſtition, and licentiouſneſs combined to nouriſh, laſted two hundred years: and if theſe unholy wars did not extend the dominion of the church, nor eſtabliſh the papal power in the countries where they were made, both the church and the popes found their account in them ſeveral ways, where they meant much more to find it. The croiſades were conſpiracies of the religious againſt the civil ſociety of Europe. Theſe two ſocieties

were nearly on a balance of power. The croiſades turned it in favor of the former. MEZERAY thinks that the uneaſy and dangerous ſituation of his affairs in Italy determined URBAN the ſecond to come into France, when he held the council of Clermont there; and that the promoting of the firſt expedition againſt the Saracens was nothing more than a pretence he took. But he had no need of any ſuch pretence. He was a french man: and France, as MEZERAY himſelf ſays, was the ordinary refuge of the popes. Beſides, when he had reſolved to put in execution this unchriſtian project, he could not fail to ſee that there was no country then in Europe, wherein this ſcene of farce, which was to produce ſo many ſcenes of tragedy, could be acted with ſo much advantage as in France. Italy and Germany were divided between him and the emperor. Spain was the theatre of one perpetual war againſt the Moors. Britain was ſuperſtitious enough, but Britain lay in a remote corner of the world: the norman invaſion was juſt over, and the new government ſcarce ſettled. France was liable to none of theſe objections: and the ſucceſs which his holineſs had there might ſurpaſs his expectations, as it ſurpaſſes almoſt the belief of poſterity. The enthuſiaſtical fury, for ſuch it was, infuſed at Clermont by the pope, and fomented by his emiſſaries every where elſe, became at once an epidemical diſtemper, and all Europe grew delirious. Princes abandoned their dominions, and private men their patrimonies, to the care and protection of the church.

Beſides

Beſides innumerable frauds that the clergy committed, the regulars eſpecially, to invade the poſſeſſions of the laity; the laity was obliged to ſell them on theſe occaſions, and the clergy was ready and able to buy. No wonder, therefore, ſince power always follows property, if the religious ſociety was ſtrengthened by being enriched; if the civil was weakened by being impoveriſhed; and if, upon the whole, the church gave the law to the ſtate.

MANY other expedients were employed, like ſo many underprops, to ſupport the ſame ſyſtem. They were leſs obſerved as ſuch, becauſe they carried an appearance of religious auſterity and ſelf-denial, of edification, not of acquiſition. Some of the men who furniſhed theſe expedients, and who made them effectual to the purpoſes of eccleſiaſtical ambition, were the bubbles and the victims of their own ſuperſtitious zeal. But fools have been always led, in matters of religion eſpecially, by deſigning knaves. Hermits had been ſummoned from their ſolitudes, on ſome occaſions, to ſupport a turbulent ſeditious biſhop: one example of which has been referred to above. How much more eaſy was it for that univerſal biſhop, the pope, when religious orders multiplied, as they did prodigiouſly in the ages we ſpeak of here, and when, whoever inſtituted, he confirmed them, to employ theſe ſtanding armies of monks more ſilently, but more effectually too, in his ſervice? The croiſades gave much occaſion to theſe inſtitutions: and the

extravagance was carried so far that military orders were instituted among the rest, that is, orders of men whose particular profession obliged them to defend and propagate christianity, as long as they lived, by cutting of throats. This indeed was the general profession of all those who took the badge of the cross, whenever a pope thought fit, for the time at least for which they engaged. I say, whenever a pope thought fit; because this cruel expedient, which had been employed originally against the Mahometans, was employed afterwards against Christians, against all such as were called heretics, when every man was called by that name who did not, because he could not, think as the church of Rome ordered him to think, or who exclaimed against the abominable corruptions of that court.

Among the expedients by which the religious society was attached to the pope independently of their lawful sovereigns, and to the church independently of the state, that of a forced celibacy was one. They were a distinct order of men, and had a separate interest from the other society before. But by this institution every band, that might have united some of them at least to it, was cut off, under the specious pretence of a greater degree of christian purity and perfection. Monks and nuns took a vow of chastity, wherein celibacy was included, according to the logic employed for this political purpose: and it was manifestly necessary to the same purpose, that the secular clergy

should

ſhould be put under the ſame reſtraint. They were intended to mingle, more than the others, with civil ſociety. Their habitudes were much the ſame, and their intereſt not ſo ſeparate. There was, therefore, the more danger that they might contract a love for the civil conſtitution of their country, prefer their king to the pope, and reverence a parliament or aſſembly of the ſtates more than a council. All, that could be done to prevent ſo great a miſchief, was to hinder this attachment to their country from increaſing by that natural attachment which fathers of families have to their children. This was ſeen early: and the biſhops of Rome had taken upon them, as far back as the ſeventh century, to forbid the marriages of prieſts. Their orders had been rejected by ſome, by the Spaniards particularly, and had been ill obeyed in general. But celibacy was now enjoined more ſtrictly, and enforced more powerfully. Decrees of popes, canons of councils, all kinds of authority, were employed: and it muſt be confeſſed, to the honor of eccleſiaſtical policy, that the yoke impoſed was rendered as light as poſſible, by connivance, and even by indulgence. The concubinage of prieſts was tolerated, nunneries became brothels, and if among the ſtanding expences of convents a reaſonable allowance was not made to the monks for the neceſſary expences of fornication, "ad purgandos renes," and on a principle of health, which has been ſaid, but may be denied; this at leaſt is notorious, that the fathers were left to provide for their health, in the

beſt manner that they could, by ſimple fornication, or by adultery.

As this expedient attached the whole clergy, more intimately, to the general intereſt of the church, and to the particular intereſt of the pope; auricular confeſſion and private penance were deſigned to attach the people more intimately to the clergy *. Public confeſſions and public penance, as they had been practiſed in the primitive church, might impoſe more, and be a greater reſtraint on vice and immorality. But when it was thought ſufficient that all this paſſed privately between the confeſſors and the penitents, many advantages, which were deemed preferable to ſuch a reſtraint, reſulted from the modern practice. Penitents were exempted from public ſhame; if they bluſhed, they bluſhed in a corner: and confeſſors had the moſt ſecret tranſactions, nay the thoughts and deſigns, of mankind in their keeping. They had more: they had not only a general influence over private conſcience, but the means of exerciſing this influence in private; the means of teaching privately what they dared not preach publicly, and of inſtilling into the minds of men every principle and paſſion they pleaſed. This expedient ad-

* N. B. Whatever private confeſſions, as well as others, might have been practiſed antiently, the law, by which every perſon is obliged once in a year, I think, to confeſs all his ſins to his proper prieſt, was not made till INNOCENT the third got it enacted, among ſeveral that were calculated merely to advance the power and authority of the prieſthood, in the lateran council,

vanced

vanced the papal empire more than any: it made the biſhop of Rome, in ſome circumſtances, as terrible as the old man of the mountain; and enabled eccleſiaſtical ambition to do, more directly, more regularly, and more conſtantly, than before, all the miſchief that has been imputed to religion. A very moderate knowledge of hiſtory, eccleſiaſtical and civil, antient and modern, will furniſh examples enow to confirm this truth. It is impoſſible to read without horror, for inſtance, the accounts we have of the ambition, inſolence, and perfidy, of HADRIAN and ALEXANDER, in their diſputes with FREDERIC the firſt, whom HADRIAN, like the king of the aſſaſſins, endeavoured to have drowned, ſtabbed, or deſtroyed by magic; and whom ALEXANDER, they ſay, inſulted, in the words of the pſalmiſt, "ſuper aſpidem et "baſiliſcum ambulabis." As little can we read, without the ſame ſentiment, the proceedings of GREGORY the ninth, a worthy ſucceſſor of the ſeventh, in the next century, that is the thirteenth, againſt the ſecond FREDERIC. But if all theſe hiſtories, and others of the ſame kind, were wanting, and we had no other than that of THUANUS, that of THUANUS alone would ſerve the purpoſe, and the better for being nearer our own time. That wiſe and honeſt hiſtorian acknowledges that all the iniquities of the league were hatched and nurſed up to maturity in the confeſſionals; after which, the effects of this private influence were publicly avowed; the ſovereignty of the popes over all other ſovereigns, in matters of religion,

ligion, and in matters appertaining to religion, the infallibility of their judgments, their dispensing and deposing power, the duty of rebellion in some cases, and the merit of assassination in others, were propagated from the pulpits: and what their pastors preached, the people executed.

It might be expected, perhaps, that the quarrels which arose after the reign of CHARLES the great, from a conflict of spiritual and temporal prerogatives and jurisdiction, as well as those disturbances which arose from dissenting opinions about articles of faith, and points of doctrine, long before his time, would be appeased, and prevented for the future, by the establishment of this papal monarchy. But, if such an expectation was entertained, it was wholly disappointed. The successors of GREGORY the seventh took every opportunity of asserting their right to all the powers, temporal and spiritual, that he had claimed, and of exercising them as vicars of CHRIST. There is a decree of BONIFACE the eighth, who was less able, less successful, and more mad, if possible, than HILDEBRAND, that holds it's place in the canon law, and that declares subjection to the roman pontiff necessary to the salvation of every human creature *. This subjection too is not confined to spirituals: for, in the Extravagants, he claims a right to the two swords, and asserts a jurisdiction, over all temporal, as well as spiritual,

* Subesse romano pontifici.

autho-

authority †. This juriſdiction was confirmed by the council of Lateran, and was founded in the theology of thoſe doctors, who made a chriſtianity of their own, with little regard to that of CHRIST whoſe name it bore, and often in plain contradiction to his goſpel. Thus St. THOMAS, the evangelical doctor, as he has been called very improperly and very impertinently, pretended to prove, by ſhameful prevarications, that ſuch a ſubmiſſion as the popes required was an eſſential condition of ſalvation: and he, like the reſt of his tribe, and their maſters the popes, inflamed the diſſentions about articles of faith and doctrines as much, as about prerogatives and juriſdictions.

TO what purpoſe ſhould I quote any more inſtances, to ſhew that this has been the proceeding of the church of Rome, as I have aſſerted before, and as I aſſert now over again, from the eleventh and twelfth centuries? The fact is notorious. But yet this doctrine had never been acquieſced in univerſally. Sometimes kings, nay ſometimes councils, had oppoſed it: and the reformers, in the ſixteenth century, were ſo far from advancing any thing new on this head, that numbers of Chriſtians in the weſt, as well as all the churches in the eaſt, had conſtantly diſowned it during every intervening age; and that the former had ſuffered rather, than to own it, the moſt cruel

† Regem ſe regum, mundi monarcham, unicum in ſpiritualibus et temporalibus dominum promulgavit.

perſecu-

perſecutions. Thus the ſame conflicts of juriſdiction were frequently renewed, and the ſame calamities continued, by the ſame pertinacious ſpirit of ambition; till princes being tired with theſe ſtruggles, they came little by little, at different times and in different places, to certain terms of accommodation. Princes renewed with the popes their former alliances with the hierarchy, and compounded the beſt they could with the tyrant they had acknowledged. But notwithſtanding theſe compoſitions, and tho the popes dare not exerciſe their pretended rights as they did formerly, they keep up their pretenſions, in hopes that an happy revival of ignorance and barbarity may do them, ſooner or later, as much good as the unhappy reſurrection of letters did them hurt.

SECTION XXXVIII.

SUCH as I have ſketched them rudely, but truly, were the eccleſiaſtical and papal uſurpations on civil ſovereignty, complete almoſt before avowed, and oppoſed as ſoon as avowed. But the other uſurpations of Rome were different in their direction, and in their courſe. The intention of theſe being to veſt in the biſhop of that ſee the ſole right of deciding in matters of faith and doctrine, either immediately without, or ultimately with, the concurrence of a council, and by way of confirmation, they were plainly directed againſt all the inferior ranks in the hierarchy: and thus, whilſt princes and ſtates defended their own rights by

by conſtant, tho unconcerted, efforts, they left the pope at liberty to deal with his ſubjects, for ſuch the clergy, even the prelates, had made themſelves, as he thought fit, and to proceed in his judgments with their advice, or without it. The conſequence ſoon followed: the laity believed as the church taught, and the church taught as the pope pronounced. But we muſt not imagine that this uſurpation on a prerogative the church had always exerciſed by her repreſentative aſſemblies, convened without the papal authority, and acting independently on it, was admitted becauſe either the religious or the civil ſociety thought it belonged to the pope by divine right; or becauſe the former being unable to reſiſt it without the abatement and aid of the latter, the latter neglected it as unconcerned in it. Neither of theſe ſocieties could believe that this prerogative belonged to the pope by divine right; which the greateſt authorities and the recent practice of the whole eccleſiaſtical order contradicted: and, if we conſider the paſſages of preceding ages, we ſhall find reaſon to believe that princes and civil magiſtrates did not ſuffer this uſurpation to take place, becauſe they neglected it, or thought themſelves unconcerned in it, but becauſe they deſired that it might take place. What is here ſaid deſerves to be explained: and when it is ſo, tho it be ſimply my conjecture, I think it will juſtify itſelf.

FROM the time there had been ſuch a thing as chriſtia-

christianity in the world, Christians had been divided not only about compliments, rites, and ceremonies, "such silly things, says Hooker, that "very easiness doth make them hard to be disputed about in serious manner*," but about every important article of their religion; and as soon as they had power in their hands, they persecuted one another, and disturbed the peace of the empire. To remedy this evil, councils were employed: but councils defined and decreed to little purpose. To support their decisions, the authority of the emperors was employed. Some of these, like Theodosius, made the most sanguinary laws, and exercised the most cruel tyranny, in the cause of orthodoxy. Others of them seemed to have so much concern for the church, that they had none for the empire; like Honorius, who was extremely busy at Ravenna in punishing Manicheans, Donatists, Priscillianists, and heretics of every denomination, whilst the Goths marched without opposition to Rome. All this, however, proved ineffectual; and new heads sprouted out from the hydra of theology, as fast as the spiritual and temporal swords lopped them off. It could not be otherwise. The scriptures are a sure criterion of orthodoxy when they are applied no farther, than they were designed to be such; and they could be designed to be such no farther, than they are intelligible and plain. He who pretends to employ this rule any farther, profanes the scriptures, and abuses himself or

* Ep. dedicat.

others.

others. This criterion, conſidered under the image of a rule, may be ſaid to mark out to us the great points, the inches, and the feet, for inſtance. But the leſs dimenſions, the lines, for inſtance, are not marked, or they are not diſcernible. The maſter builder, who put this rule into our hands that we might work out our ſalvation by it, proportioned the rule to the work. How came we then, paultry builders that we are! to mark new and more minute diviſions in this rule; to alter it, under pretence of making it more complete, and to meaſure and to build by gueſs? The goſpel is the rule: theology is the rule thus altered. He who adheres to one, founds his religion on divine; he who adheres to the other, on human, authority; the firſt infallible and fixed, the ſecond precarious and variable.

Metaphysics and tradition, their own whimſies and thoſe of their predeceſſors, guided the clergy, and conſtituted their theology. They never conſidered the word of God naked, if I may ſay ſo; nor ever looked at it, except through a theological medium, through which every man might ſee whatever he had a mind to ſee in it. Many of the queſtions that aroſe were, in no degree, objects of reaſon: and no men living were leſs fit, than the fathers of the church, the greateſt of them, St. Chrysostom or St. Jerom, and St. Ambrose or St. Austin, to ſpeak or write on any ſubject, that required a clear determination of ideas, a cloſeneſs of reaſoning, an evange-

evangelical candor, or even common ingenuouſneſs. Beſides that it was difficult very often to know whether theſe men ſpoke ſincerely, or with economy, they declaimed much: and thoſe of them, who pretended to reaſon, reaſoned ill. They perverted the ſenſe, and defamed the characters, of their adverſaries: they quibbled and cavilled, and then decided dogmatically on ſubjects they did not underſtand; as St. AUSTIN did, I preſume, in the caſe of pelagianiſm, and in the doctrine of abſolute predeſtination; which he, after St. PAUL, and CALVIN after him, endeavoured to eſtabliſh. Their perſonal partialities, the ſpirit of party and faction, were manifeſt; as in the caſe of ORIGEN, who did great honor and ſervice to the chriſtian church, and yet was condemned by the ſame prelate that ordained SYNESIUS biſhop of Ptolemais, tho the honeſt philoſopher declined this honor, and declared he would neither abandon his wife, nor ſeveral of thoſe platonic opinions that were repugnant to the chriſtian doctrine. There are ſo many examples to juſtify this charge, in every part of it, that if any choleric divine ſhould preſume to deny it, the ſame fate might attend him and the fathers he took under his protection, as attended them and the monk who defended them againſt BARBEYRAC. The charge might be proved out of their own works, and their theology ſhewn to be no better than their ethics.

I HAVE touched over again, among others, ſome things

things that have been mentioned already, in order to introduce my conjecture about the reaſon, that might determine the civil powers to make no oppoſition to the popes when they aſſumed firſt an abſolute authority, even ſuperior to that of councils, in matters of faith, and in all matters of doctrine and diſcipline. Their reaſon muſt have been political. It could not be religious. The manner of holding the firſt council at Jeruſalem, and the manner of decreeing in it, as they are repreſented in the fifteenth of the Acts, made ſtrongly for the councils, and not at all for the popes. This was certainly the firſt council, a precedent for all others, and the foundation of their authority over the whole church. No man, I believe, before BARONIUS, had diſcovered that CHRIST himſelf held a council, and that he preſided in it, when he called his diſciples to him, and aſked them firſt, as one who enquired about news, whom men ſaid that he was; and next as a preſident who took their opinions whom they ſaid that he was *. But this little ſophiſtry was meant to inſinuate that as CHRIST gave the keys on this occaſion to PETER and his ſucceſſors, ſo he gave them particularly a ſuperiority over councils, nay, that he rendered theſe the leaſt uſeful aſſemblies in the world. PETER alone pronounced the decree of this type of a council †; and tho the others aſſented, no doubt,

* Matt. xvi. Mark viii. Luke ix.

† Actio CHRISTI typum quendam exprimit celebrandi concilium.

yet does it not appear that the form of conſulting them was obſerved. The practice of the church afforded no more reaſon, than the terms of the goſpel, for this ſuperiority of the popes over councils; but the woeful experience of many ages ſhewed how inadequate the inſtitution of councils themſelves was to the purpoſe of preſerving uniformity in chriſtian churches, and peace in chriſtian ſtates: and this political conſideration became a ſufficient reaſon to the civil powers for favoring, or at leaſt for not oppoſing, the uſurpation of the popes in the inſtance we ſpeak of here.

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IT had been found neceſſary, even in the apoſtolical age, to elect a preſbyter in every church, who might preſerve the unity of it by his authority, and prevent the ſchiſms which aroſe perpetually. This was the inſtitution of biſhops. As chriſtianity ſpread, as biſhops multiplied, as they grew more powerful, and as theology grew more and more contentious, the ſame expedient, that had been found uſeful, if not wholly effectual, to preſerve the uniformity of particular churches, might ſeem the moſt proper to be employed for the ſame purpoſes in the univerſal church: and in this caſe who ſo fit to be the univerſal biſhop as the biſhop of Rome? Rome had been the ſeat of empire, when the empire had been in it's glory. If the dignity of cities was to determine, as it had always done, the dignity of ſees, there was none that could vie with that of Rome. If a right

derived

derived from St. PETER, the ſuppoſed prince of the apoſtles, was to determine, there was none neither, in this caſe, to vie with that of Rome. Antioch, the firſt biſhopric of PETER, had yielded to the ſecond imperial city, Conſtantinople. Who could vie then with the biſhop of the firſt imperial city, that pretended, and was believed to have been the ſecond biſhopric of PETER, as well as the ſcene of his martyrdom?

IT is true that ſome biſhops of Rome had erred moſt grievouſly in their judgments, and been ſcandalous in their manners. But others had retrieved, in ſome degree, the honor of the ſee: and if the hereſies and vices of popes were made objections againſt them, in this caſe, what church was there that could boaſt an uninterrupted ſucceſſion of orthodox and pious prelates? In ſhort, all the churches of the weſt had contracted, in proceſs of time, ſuch an habitual reverence for that of Rome, that her opinions in matters of religion and conſcience had been frequently aſked, and that the judgments of her biſhops had been received with an apparent ſubmiſſion, even by thoſe who did not acknowledge, till long afterwards, a power to impoſe them. The churches of Spain and of Gaul afford a moſt remarkable inſtance to our preſent purpoſe, in the famous caſe of the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt. Both of them paid a great regard to the papal authority in matters of this kind: the latter, I think, moſt and ſooneſt; tho the former has outſtripped her

ſince in a bigot attachment to it: and yet both theſe churches had added the words "filioque," in order to declare their belief that the Holy Ghoſt proceeded from the Son as well as the Father, to the conſtantinopolitan creed, not only without, but againſt, the conſent of the popes. This addition too was not only maintained three hundred years together, but impoſed, at laſt, on the church of Rome; one of her infallible biſhops having admitted it into his creed very wiſely, and choſen to authoriſe what he could not alter, rather than ſuffer ſo great a part of the weſtern church to ſtand in oppoſition to his infallibility, at the very time when the eſtabliſhment of it was attempted.

AFTER this time the clergy grew more obſequious to the popes, and more inſolent to their princes; for as the power of the former increaſed, their independency on the latter increaſed with it. If it had not been ſo, we ſhould have heard of more oppoſitions to the doctrines of Rome; and thoſe we do hear of would have prevailed ſooner. But as the civil power deſired nothing more, than an uniformity of belief for the ſake of peace, and thought that this uniformity could be preſerved no way ſo well, as by giving to one biſhop a ſuperintendency over the faith of the whole church, two things followed of courſe. One we know. The other we may conjecture from what we know. We know that civil and eccleſiaſtical power united their efforts to exterminate, by inquiſitions,

quiſitions, by croiſades, and all the cruelties they were able to exerciſe, every ſect that aroſe in direct and open oppoſition to the doctrines and deciſions of the church of Rome. We conjecture that in caſes where the oppoſition was more confined, and more diſguiſed, where it ſeemed directed to diminiſh, rather than to aboliſh, the authority of the popes, the ſame thing happened formerly in many places, which we ſee happen in France at this day. A great number of the inferior clergy, few of the prelates, refuſed to accept the conſtitution Unigenitus. The former have been diſcountenanced and oppreſſed without much noiſe; and thoſe of them that perſiſt, perſiſt in ſilence and obſcurity. The others die off, and are replaced by men more complaiſant and more politic. Thus the oppoſition to this bull will make no figure in hiſtory, and the doctrine of it will paſs for that of the whole gallican church conforming implicitly to a papal conſtitution. The pretended explanations, reſtrictions, and other prevarications, that were employed to trim between God and the pope, will remain in the pamphlets of the time alone, and in the cloſets of antiquaries. Thus an appearance of uniformity in matters of faith has been, and may be, impoſed on poſterity, by ſtifling the proofs of the contrary: and, if this failed, the church would have nothing more to do, to preſerve the illuſion of uniformity, than what ſhe has done ſo often and ſo long; to quote thoſe alone who have ſpoken the ſame language as ſhe ſpeaks, and to take no notice

of others, or to paſs them by as heretics whoſe ſuffrage ought not to be brought to account.

THE pope is a general; the clergy a ſtanding army, which has fought his battles, like other armies, without any regard to the juſtice or injuſtice of the cauſe: and the common ſoldiers of which, as of other armies, have ſometimes mutinied in particular quarters, the general officers ſeldom, the whole, or the greateſt part, never. That even the common ſoldiers of this army ſhould mutiny, at any time, may appear the more extraordinary, becauſe no general ever recompenſed the zeal of private men in his cauſe more ſignally than the pope has done. He procured them free quarters, and very lucrative exemptions, in every chriſtian country. He abetted their inſolence, and employed every artifice, as well as his whole power, to impoſe on the ſuperſtition of mankind an high conceit of the dignity of this ſpiritual militia. One artifice of this ſort, the moſt extravagant that was ever invented, and the moſt effectual at the ſame time, ſhall be produced. You may be ſurpriſed, perhaps, when I ſay it was the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation.

SECTION XXXIX.

NOTHING could be more intelligible, nor even to human judgment more reaſonable, than the inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper; ſince the ſole deſign of it was that Chriſtians ſhould commemorate

morate in common the death of CHRIST and the redemption of mankind, as well as ſignify, by participating of the ſame bread and the ſame wine, that they were of the ſame religion, if, as ERASMUS ſays in paraphraſing St. PAUL, "videtur agnoſcere communem religionem qui communibus cibis veſcitur *." But refinements, and figurative expreſſions employed about it, made the plaineſt thing in the world myſtical and unintelligible. The effects of the euchariſt were made ſo firſt, and the very elements, the bread and the wine, became ſo afterwards. This ſacrament was no longer a ſimple act of commemoration and of profeſſion. It was made a great and dreadful myſtery, of which Chriſtians may partake to their damnation, as well as to their ſalvation. The perſon, by whom it was inſtituted, is repreſented ſometimes under images that render it impoſſible to frame any of the efficacy, or even of the inſtitution, of the ſacrament. CHRIST is a vine, he is a rock, nay he is a coat, according to St. PAUL; and we clothe ourſelves with him in our baptiſm, according to St. CHRYSOSTOM. According to the ſame eloquent father too, he ſtands to us in the relation of an head, of an houſe, of a table, and of a root †: Now one of theſe images alone can give us an imperfect idea of the efficacy of this ſacrament. CHRIST is the

* Paraph. in ep. ad Col. ep. I. c. x. ℣ 15.

† —CHRISTUM ſuis eſſe non ſolum caput, domum menſam, radicem, ſed etiam veſtem quando in baptiſmo CHRISTUS induatur. Vid. CASAUB. in Exercit.

head of a body, and the faithful are the members. The ſame loaf is made up of many crumbs, the ſame body of many members†: and therefore according to St. PAUL's reaſoning, all thoſe who eat of one loaf compoſe one body‖. Thus CHRIST is, in this community, at once the ſon of God and the brother of man. The brother, but the elder brother, of the elect*: and in the epiſtle to the Epheſians we are ſaid to be fleſh of his fleſh, and bone of his bone, "ex carne ejus et "oſſibus ejus." Theſe immenſe and inexplicable advantages are to be aſcribed, principally, to the efficacy of this myſterious ſacrament. By baptiſm, we are made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt. By this ſacrament, we are made ſuch of the body and blood of CHRIST. But I will conclude, inſtead of citing any more particular inſtances, by borrowing from CASAUBON ſome general words, that may ſerve to ſhew how high mens notions have been raiſed about this theological myſtery, by the theological abuſe of figures. "The euchariſty, rightly taken, is the inſtru-"ment of that conjunction by which we grow "into one body with the Son of God, and with "all the faithful—What can be more admirable, "what more ſtupendous, than that man ſhould "be thus joined and coalited with God, the "creature with the creator, the mortal with the

† Panis ex innumeris granis ſic conflatus eſt . . . corpus ſic ex diverſis membris conſtat. Paraph. ERASM.

‖ Quoniam unus panis, unum corpus multi ſumus, omnes qui de uno pane participamus. Ep. ad Corin. I. c. x.

* Primogenitus in multis fratribus. Ep. ad Rom. viii. 29.

"immortal,

" immortal, the finite with the infinite, and earth " with heaven? This miracle is greater than that " of creating a world out of nothing*." I think it is; but I think too that it would be as eaſy to diſtinguiſh the moſt extravagant language, that platoniſc or pythagorean enthuſiaſts ever held, out of blaſphemy, as theſe orthodox expreſſions.

THE yoke of chriſtianity is eaſy, and the burden light. But if theology has ſhortened the decalogue, it has lengthened the creed; and has maintained hitherto, in the enlightened ages, ſuch a tyranny over the minds of men, in oppoſition to reaſon and revelation too, as could not be eſtabliſhed in the darkeſt without much difficulty. In the caſe juſt mentioned, concerning the myſtical effects of the euchariſty, we are required by human authority to believe that the moſt divine and important truths are concealed under a variety of figurative expreſſions, which have no conceivable applications, at leaſt none that are conceivable to us uninſpired perſons; or elſe ſuch as cannot be made by us, without a profanation that ſhocks the ear of every man who keeps up in his mind an awful ſenſe of the majeſty of the Supreme Being, nor dares to

* ——Euchariſtiam legitimo modo ſumptam inſtrumentum eſſe ejus conjunctionis, per quam in corpus unum cum filio Dei —coaleſcimus, et cum caeteris etiam omnibus fidelibus— quid magis admirabile, aut magis ſtupendum, quam jungi, atque adeo coaleſcere in corpus unum, hominem cum Deo, creaturam cum creatore, mortalem cum immortali, finitum cum infinito, coenum cum coelo? Hoc majus eſt miraculum, quam de nihilo mundum creaſſe.

think,

think, like thoſe whom we call divines, as familiarly and as lowly of God as of man. In the caſe that is to be mentioned concerning the elements, as they are called, of the euchariſty, your church requires, and the whole chriſtian church did require before the reformation, that we ſhould believe ſubſtances, which give us the ideas of bread and wine, both before and after conſecration, to be, after it, ſuch ſubſtances as give us the ideas of fleſh and blood. If we ſhould ſay that in fact they give us theſe ideas, we ſhould lie moſt impudently: and if we ſhould ſay, as you pretended Catholics do ſay, that, tho they give us ſtill the ideas of bread and wine, yet they are miraculouſly fleſh and blood, we ſhould talk a language that paſſes on millions, and yet can paſs on no one man who conſults his reaſon impartially, or who conſiders the proofs of chriſtian revelation by miracles, which are, in truth, appeals to the ſenſes.

We are all conſcious, or very little experiment and reflection will ſuffice to make us ſo, that we know nothing more of ſubſtances than their effects. God has given us no other way of diſtinguiſhing them: and if we abandon that, nothing can be affirmed or denied concerning them. A miracle may change one ſubſtance into another, as water was changed into wine at the feaſt in Galilee. But the accidents cannot remain, and the ſubſtance be changed; or to ſpeak more plainly, a different ſubſtance muſt produce different ideas in us. A ſupernatural operation muſt be ſenſible,

ble, or it is no more a miracle than if nothing was operated. The gueſts at Cana would not have believed that the water was turned into wine, if they had not been convinced of the change by their taſte: and if the diſciples were convinced, after his reſurrection, that JESUS was the ſame CHRIST who had been crucified, it was becauſe they ſaid that they ſaw him to be the ſame, and that one of them probed the wounds he had received on the croſs. According to the firſt example, then, the communicants in your church ſhould eat raw fleſh, and the prieſt by his peculiar privilege ſhould drink warm blood; for the tranſubſtantiation is inſtantaneous: and, according to the laſt example, if the elements in the euchariſty continue to the ſight and taſte the ſame, they are the ſame bread and the ſame wine, after conſecration, that they were before.

HE who ſhould think to evade the abſurdity by inſiſting that God works two miracles at once, that he changes the bread and wine into fleſh and blood, and that, to exerciſe our faith, he alters the phyſical conſtitution of the elect in ſuch a manner, on this occaſion, that fleſh and blood produce in them the ideas of bread and wine; he, I ſay, who ſhould think ſo, would only increaſe the abſurdity by endeavouring to evade it; as they who are in the dirt, dirty themſelves more by endeavouring to get out of it. He would aſſume a miracle and no miracle, or rather a miracle contrived to diſguiſe a miracle, and a fraudulent impoſition on our ſenſes

for the excellent purpoſe of exerciſing faith againſt knowledge, and in direct contradiction to all the proofs that CHRIST gave of the divinity of his miſſion by appealing to the ſenſes of mankind: ſo that if tranſubſtantiation be true, the whole chriſtian revelation may be falſe. No one would impute ſuch a kind of proceeding to any man who was not a profeſſed juggler: and yet ſuch a proceeding is imputed to God, by popes, councils, and the whole tribe of your divines. But it is time I ſhould leave a ſubject that gives me horror, even when I write againſt it; and that has been exhauſted by abler pens, by that of TILLOTSON particularly, in a ſhort tract preferable to immenſe volumes. It is time I ſhould remember that my buſineſs here is not to refute the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, but to ſhew how it came to be eſtabliſhed, and the political view of the popes in the eſtabliſhment of it.

SECTION XL.

TO this purpoſe, then, I ſay that a ſuppoſed myſtery in the elements aroſe firſt, like a ſuppoſed myſtery in the effects of the euchariſty, from figurative expreſſion. There is no one, perhaps, in the whole goſpel, leſs liable to an equivocal ſenſe, than that which CHRIST employed when he ſaid, "This is my body, and this is my blood," in the very act of giving bread and wine to his diſciples who were at ſupper with him, juſt before his death, for a remembrance of which this ceremony

mony of a ſupper was then inſtituted by him. The figure was eaſy, the application natural, and they could not underſtand the expreſſion literally. It is impoſſible to ſuppoſe that they did, unleſs we ſuppoſe them mad: and yet it is this very expreſſion that has been made the foundation of a doctrine, which Hurons and Iroquois, Samojedes and Hottentots, would bluſh to own, and which has brought diſgrace on chriſtianity, if any ever did, as well as innumerable calamities on the chriſtian world. The fathers of the church loved figurative ſtyle, and their whole theology is nothing elſe: but they employed it more to perplex than to explain; and it is not wonderful, therefore, if they ſeemed to confound the typical, or ſymbolical, with the real, body of CHRIST. They ſeemed to do it, or they did it, if you will, ſometimes. But when their matter led them to ſpeak with more caution and preciſion, ſo many of them, and of the greateſt of them, contradiſtinguiſhed the firſt from the laſt, in ſuch plain and ſtrong terms, that it is evident a real corporeal preſence in the euchariſty was neither their opinion, nor the general belief of the church in the firſt ages. Give me leave to add, tho I cite no other particular paſſages here, becauſe they have been cited by many on the ſame occaſion, that the inconſiſtency of your church never appears to me more barefaced, than it does when I conſider that ſhe has made the writings of St. AUSTIN almoſt a rule of faith; and yet that this father not only declares, in many places, againſt her favorite doctrine, which was not

at

at that time a doctrine*, but guards againſt it, for fear it ſhould become ſuch by a wrong interpretation of the ſcripture. He brings an example of wrong interpretations that may be made, by quoting theſe words, "Except ye eat the fleſh of "the ſon of man, and drink his blood, ye have no "life in you." Theſe words, interpreted literally, contain, according to him, a great impiety. They are to be interpreted, therefore, figuratively. The doctrine of tranſubſtantiation is, therefore, an impious doctrine, according to this father.

But how carefully ſoever the typical and ſymbolical body of Christ in the euchariſty was diſtinguiſhed, on ſome occaſions, from his real body, from the body born of the virgin Mary, which was crucified, which roſe from the dead, and which aſcended into heaven, they grew to be eaſily confounded in the minds of men, by the continual uſe of the ſame figure without the ſame explanation of it; and the ſign paſſed for the thing ſignified among many. This has often happened: and it happened the more naturally in this caſe, becauſe the imaginations of men being heated with myſtery, the doctrine that was the moſt myſterious was the moſt likely to prevail. The doctrine, however, of Christ's corporeal preſence in the ſacrament would not have prevailed, even in the eighth century, very probably, ſo far as to be eſtabliſhed by the authority of a council, if it had not been found neceſſary to evade an argument that

* De doct. chriſtiana, lib. iii.

the

the breakers of images urged, and to ſupport the ſtupid worſhip of them, as TILLOTSON obſerves. One ſynod, that of Conſtantinople, determined that CHRIST had left an image of his body, the bread in the euchariſty, and therefore no other image of him ought to be made. Another ſynod, the ſecond nicean, determined, about thirty years afterwards, that the bread and wine after conſecration were the body and blood, not the images of the body and blood, of CHRIST; that he had, therefore, left no image of himſelf, and that other images of him might be worſhipped. Zeal for idolatry of one kind propagated idolatry of another: and to the worſhip of images, which the Chriſtians practiſed, as well as the heathens, and which the heathens excuſed, as well as the Chriſtians, the latter added ſomething too abſurd, and too abominable, to make a part of the religious rites of the former. They conjured their God into a wafer; they adored him in that wafer; they offered him up in a true ſacrifice to himſelf; and they eat him up, to conclude the ceremony. "Sit "anima mea cum philoſophis, non cum Chriſti-"anis, gente ſtolidiſſima, qui Deum faciunt et "comedunt," a ſaying of AVERROES, which no man needs to diſown.

ALL this was not eſtabliſhed without great conteſt, nor ſoon. In the ninth and following centuries, it was much oppoſed. One of thoſe who oppoſed it, BERENGER, dean of Angers, and a man famous for learning and piety when there was little

little of either among the religious ſociety, had been frightened into a recantation, which he recanted as ſoon as he got out of the papal hands. It is the leſs wonderful that he ſhould do ſo, ſince the pope and his council appeared to have no very clear notion of their own doctrine, but blundered miſerably when they defined it, in contradiction to that which he had taught; and ſince GREGORY the ſeventh found it neceſſary, a few years afterwards, to define over again the pretended orthodox doctrine of the real corporeal preſence. He left out of his definition the circumſtances of handling and breaking, of grinding and bruiſing, this body between the teeth of the faithful, as I believe, becauſe they were too ſhocking to ſtand in it, and might be inſinuated with more advantage when the general doctrine had got prejudice on it's ſide. They have been ſo, they are avowed parts of it; and this is the doctrine which was declared orthodox, eleven hundred years after CHRIST, in the latin church, under the ridiculous name of tranſubſtantiation: a ridiculous name indeed, and that bears more analogy to chemiſtry than to theology. What HILDEBRAND defined, his ſucceſſors maintained: and INNOCENT the third, who was a pope of the ſame ſpirit, procured a moſt ſolemn confirmation of it in the numerous council of Lateran, which he held at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and in which ſo many other things were done to advance his own tyranny, and the ſuperiority of the religious over the civil ſociety. The folly of the holy war was renewed, books of decretals were publiſhed

publiſhed and authoriſed, auricular confeſſion was introduced, the cup was taken from the laity: in ſhort, eccleſiaſtical pride and policy being now come to their height, the whole ſyſtem of religion became more than ever a ſyſtem of uſurpation; and ambition improved to her purpoſes all that ſuperſtition and ignorance could be made to adopt. It will be no breach of charity, therefore, to affirm, that tho the doctrine of CHRIST's real and corporeal preſence in the ſacrament owed it's firſt riſe to the abuſe of figurative ſtyle, and to the diſputes of divines on another ſubject; yet the ſolemn definition of tranſubſtantiation was one of thoſe artifices, that the popes employed to raiſe an high opinion, of the dignity and power of the prieſthood. No popes had ever more reaſon to raiſe ſuch an opinion, than GREGORY the ſeventh and INNOCENT the third; for none ever atchieved or undertook ſuch conqueſts as theſe two made at the head of the church over the civil power, both of them in Germany, and the laſt of them in our iſland likewiſe.

WE may ſay the better that this artifice was contrived for the purpoſe I ſuppoſe, ſince the prerogative and power of making God himſelf is not only aſcribed, by the writers of your church, to every prieſt, but an argument is drawn from thence to ſhew how much reverence ought to be paid to an order of men, the leaſt of whom has a prerogative and power of which the greateſt earthly potentates cannot boaſt. But however this artifice was contrived and conducted, how impudently ſo-

ever popes and councils impoſed, for an article of faith, what it is more impious to believe, than it would be to diſbelieve the whole creed, and however civil and eccleſiaſtical power united to enforce it, with all the fury of inquiſitions, it never could gain, from the eleventh, to the ſixteenth century, in which it was rejected with a juſt abhorrence by whole nations, a full and quiet poſſeſſion of the minds of men in any country; no not in Italy; no not at Rome. They who had not the front to defend this monſtrous doctrine, and yet would not ſeparate from the church of Rome, had recourſe to the ſole expedient that remained. Far from defending it, far from maintaining it as an original article of chriſtian faith, they choſe to put the deciſion on another point. Many of the moſt learned and orthodox, long before LUTHER and CALVIN aroſe, had declared that men were at liberty to believe, or not to believe, the manner of CHRIST's preſence in the ſacrament to be corporeal and by tranſubſtantiation: but the popiſh doctors inſiſted that this liberty ſubſiſted no longer, ſince the church had defined the particular manner of this preſence, in the council of Lateran. Thus they tried to change the ſtate of the queſtion, to deliver themſelves from the cruel neceſſity of juſtifying blaſphemy, and demonſtrating contradictions; and to decide the merits of a cauſe, that could not be maintained, by thoſe of another that they thought might be ſo. In this, however, they were deceived: and inſtead of ſupporting tranſubſtantiation by the authority of the church, they ſhook

ſhook the authority of the church, by employing it to this purpoſe, more than by all the other unworthy purpoſes to which it had been often proſtituted. It was impoſſible to perſuade men that the church had any right to make new articles of faith, and of ſuch a nature as this was eſpecially, under the pretence of declaring thoſe which the ſcriptures had impoſed on Chriſtians: and ſince it was impoſſible to perſuade, the ſame violence was uſed to force this article into general profeſſion, that was employed in the caſe of arianiſm. Nay more blood has been ſhed, and the calamities brought on the world by theſe conteſts have been of longer duration, than the others. They are not yet at an end.

SECTION XLI.

WHAT has been ſaid in this eſſay, and nothing has been ſaid which may not be eaſily juſtified, is ſufficient to ſhew that none of the inſtitutions, contrived to preſerve or reſtore peace among Chriſtians, have had this effect even from the firſt. Thoſe that the apoſtles made, concerning which tho men talk much they know little, had it not. If the diſſenſions of chriſtian congregations were ſuch as did not break out to the eyes of the heathens, all was ſtrife and contention within: and the ſtate of chriſtianity continued the ſame during thoſe ages, when the government of the church had firſt a great mixture of democracy in it, and when it grew up afterwards into a

more ariſtocratical form. The evils ſtrengthened under theſe forms, and grew quite intolerable under the monarchical. Under that government it became tyranny: and the whole ſyſtem of chriſtianity, which has been always making, and is not yet made, uniform, became ſuch a ſyſtem of avarice and ambition, carried on by fraud and violence in their turns, that, new abuſes being ſtill accumulated on old, it might have been diſputed, whether chriſtian flocks would not have fed themſelves better without any paſtors at all, and whether the peace of the world would not have been provided for better without any religion at all. It may be aſked now, and I expect you ſhould aſk, in what particulars the ſtate of chriſtianity has been mended, to the honor of religion and to the good of mankind, ſince the laſt expedient deſigned for theſe purpoſes was laid aſide by multitudes, and the pope was no longer the ſpiritual monarch of Chriſtians, nor the center of their union? The queſtion is reaſonable: and I will anſwer it very ſincerely.

I THINK then that the ſtate of chriſtianity has been mended to the honor of religion and to the good of mankind in ſome particulars, not in all: and that even they who remain in the papal communion have, in this reſpect, ſome obligation to thoſe who have ſeparated themſelves from it. That ſo many nations withdrew in the ſixteenth century from their ſubjection to the mock ſovereignty and real tyranny of the pope, has been to the

the honor of religion ſurely; ſince the whole body of Chriſtians is no longer obliged to acknowledge for vicar of CHRIST every man, however unworthy his character may be, whom the moſt corrupt college on earth elects to that imaginary dignity by a ſuppoſed inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt. It has been to the good of mankind ſurely, that the independency of the church on the ſtate is taken away in thoſe countries that have renounced all allegiance to the powerful abettor of it, the pope; and that it is extremely reduced in thoſe that profeſs to hold the ſame allegiance ſtill. It has been ſurely for the good of mankind, and for the honor of chriſtianity, to ſhew the world that the law of God is immutable, like the author of it; and that orders, diſciplines, rites, ceremonies, and acts of external devotion, means invented by men to maintain and propagate this law, are not only mutable in their nature, but neceſſary to be altered, on ſome occaſions, in the courſe of human affairs. It was the more fit ſurely to convince men of theſe truths, ſince they had been led hoodwinked ſo long by the knavery of the religious ſociety, that they began to think there was nothing immutable in religion ſo much as the means employed to ſupport it, nor ſo little as the end. The wealth and grandeur of the clergy, and the ſuperſtition of the laity had been, for more than fourteen hundred years, the principal of theſe immutable means; and the experience of ſo long time had ſhewn that the means deſtroyed the end. They gave occaſion to all that miſchief which

atheiſtical perſons are ſo ready to impute to religion itſelf. Without theſe, diſputes concerning doctrines of mere ſpeculation would have made leſs noiſe and diſturbance in the world, and enterpriſes of ambition could not have been ſupported as they have been. To diminiſh all theſe, therefore, and to remove an authority which often has, and always may, ſtand in competition with the ſupreme authority of every ſociety, are the firſt ſteps neceſſary to eſtabliſh true religion, good government, and public tranquillity.

As theſe ſteps were neceſſary, ſo they were juſt: for the wealth and grandeur of the church had been the free gift of the ſtate originally, and they might be reſumed, therefore, whenever they became hurtful, or even unneceſſary, with as much juſtice, and better policy, than they were given. As to the other means, ignorance and ſuperſtition; tho every thing neceſſary to conſtitute them was promoted, they were not directly avowed like the others. To pretend that the church has a right to the former by compact, or by virtue of any alliance with the ſtate, would be to ſay whatever comes uppermoſt in a whimſical head. To pretend that the right to them is divine, may be ranked among a great number of abſurd propoſitions, that are affirmed without proof: and bold affirmation had ſucceeded ſo well in this caſe, that he, who had aſked for any other proof, than the authority of thoſe who affirmed it, would have paſſed for abſurd himſelf.

AGAIN. Nothing can contribute more to the honor and advancement of chriſtianity, than to reduce the preachers of it, as near as poſſible, to the terms of their original inſtitution. CHRIST gave his apoſtles a commiſſion to preach and to baptiſe, to convert men by the miracles they wrought, and to edify and build up in the faith ſuch as they converted. It does not appear that they, or their immediate ſucceſſors, exceeded the bounds of this commiſſion. This was their ſole employment. The ſole wealth they enjoyed, or claimed, was a voluntary contribution, for their maintenance, in the churches which they viſited, or wherein they reſided: and how moderate this ſtipend was, may be collected from the practice of St. PAUL, who took nothing from the Corinthians, but lived on what he earned by his trade. The ſole power they enjoyed, or claimed, was that of reproving, and of delivering over to Satan, with the concurrence of the faithful, and not otherwiſe, ſuch Chriſtians as held falſe doctrines, or were guilty of enormous crimes. If any pious ſoul had foreſeen, whilſt chriſtianity was the religion of a deſpiſed and perſecuted ſect, that it would be the religion of the empire, that emperors and empreſſes, kings and queens, would be raiſed up by God to be the nurſing fathers and mothers of his church, we may aſſure ourſelves that great expectations of preſerving the faith pure and undefiled under ſuch patronages, and of infuſing univerſally the true ſpirit of chriſtianity

after ſuch examples, would have been raiſed. But all the expectations of this pious ſoul would have been diſappointed, as ſoon as the event happened; for then, on the contrary, the church got, but religion loſt; the church was decorated, but religion was diſgraced; the cauſe of one, and the cauſe of the other, was never more united in opinion, nor ſo diſtinct in reality. The nature of that revolution which CONSTANTINE made in the religion of the empire, and the place which this body of men had held in the chriſtian church whilſt chriſtianity was the profeſſion of a ſect, enabled them to take the lead, and to be the principal agents in it. Thus they fixed themſelves at the head of the new eſtabliſhment. Religion was made ſubſervient to all their purpoſes; and the wealth and grandeur of the hierarchy were the principal objects of it. They were principal objects always, they were the ſole objects at laſt: and during ſeveral ages that preceded immediately the reformation, the whole ſyſtem of chriſtianity, in our weſtern world, was nothing better than a ſyſtem of eccleſiaſtical fraud, working by ſuperſtition and on it, under the direction of the biſhops of Rome. Many ſaw this: all who ſaw it, and were not gainers by the iniquity, lamented it. Was it not time to make uſe of the firſt opportunity, which a favorable conjuncture offered, to aſſert the rights of the civil, againſt the uſurpations of the religious, ſociety? This was done in the ſixteenth century. It had been attempted before: but the attempts had been vain, and even now they

they were various; for as eccleſiaſtics had taken the lead in eſtabliſhing, they took it in reforming, chriſtianity. They preſerved much of their dignity, wealth, and authority in our church: leſs in that of LUTHER: leſs of the latter, in pretenſion and appearance at leaſt, and none of the two former, in that of CALVIN. The conſtitution of our church ſeems adapted to that of a great monarchy: the conſtitution of the Lutheran to thoſe of the little princes and ſtates of Germany: the conſtitution of CALVIN's to the government of a little and poor republic. But popery was renounced in all, the ſuperſtitions of it were aboliſhed, and that ſpiritual tyrant was ſuffered no longer to encroach on civil ſovereignty, nor to drain the wealth of theſe reformed nations into his coffers.

ANOTHER inſtance, wherein the reformation has mended the ſtate of chriſtianity, to the honor of religion, and to the good of mankind, is this. Chriſtianity retained it's name, as factions often do when they have abandoned the principles that gained them reputation, or have perverted the beſt to the worſt purpoſes, becauſe the church of Rome profeſſed to believe CHRIST to have been the Son of God, the Meſſiah, the redeemer: but then human authority had ſo controlled divine in the courſe of many ages, and had been blended with it ſo indiſcriminately to the obſervation of men who were forbid to conſult one, and were taught the duty of being implicit to the other, that this religion was no longer to be found in

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the goſpel, but in the canons of councils, the opinions of fathers, and the decrees of popes; authorities that muſt be contemptible in the eyes of every one who knows what councils, fathers, and popes have been, and who knows, beſides, that many of theſe canons, opinions, and decrees, are either fictitious or corrupted. The firſt preachers of chriſtianity could not have known it again. Many articles of faith muſt have appeared to them new: they would not have acknowledged many precepts to be evangelical, nor many inſtitutions and ceremonies to be apoſtolical. They would have occaſion often to ſay much what SOCRATES ſaid when he heard the Lyſis of PLATO read. In a word, and to finiſh up the picture, neither PETER nor PAUL would have known how to adminiſter even the ſacraments of baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper, unleſs they had gone firſt to ſome ſeminary of prieſts for inſtruction. Now this new-fangled religion the reformation purged; tried it chiefly by the only true criterion of orthodoxy, the goſpel, and brought it much nearer to the plainneſs and ſimplicity of that which CHRIST inſtituted *.

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* I ſay in the text, much nearer to the plainneſs and ſimplicity of the goſpel of CHRIST; becauſe it would not be true to ſay, entirely. All the reformed churches renounced their ſubjection to that of Rome, and aſſerted their independency. But ſome of them retained enough of her inſtitutions, cuſtoms, and policy, to ſhew that they had been once members of that body. The churches who valued themſelves for going the fartheſt, and who thought that they could never go too far, in oppoſition to that of Rome, Calviniſts abroad, and their diſciples, our

THE honor of his religion, ſo altered, ſo abuſed, and ſo defaced, required certainly that it ſhould

our Puritans, at home, threw off at once, with the outward pomp of the eccleſiaſtical order, even the decency of forms in the public worſhip. But then they aſſumed as great a licence in the interpretation of ſcripture, as ever had been taken, and exerciſed as real an eccleſiaſtical tyranny, under another diſcipline, as the roman clergy had ever exerciſed. By affecting to deduce their reformation from the moſt early times, when gifts of the Spirit were ſuppoſed to be common, they ran into enthuſiaſm; and genuine chriſtianity took as many forms as whimſical teachers could invent. Our Engliſh reformers purſued a middle courſe. They retained much more of the hierarchical order; and when they had rejected many of thoſe ſuperſtitious rites and ceremonies, which VIGILANTIUS, a pious and learned Spaniard, had cenſured, and which JEROM, an impudent and ſcurrilous [a] Hungarian, had defended a thouſand years before, with all the ferocity of a modern Huſſar; they thought it proper to go no farther, or very little farther, in this part of reformation, and fell, I think, into a great abſurdity in another: in that, I mean, which concerns the doctrines of artificial theology, grafted on chriſtianity by this very JEROM, and by the other fathers who went before him, as well as by thoſe who followed after him, ſome in the third, others in the fourth and fifth centuries; when that art of enſlaving mankind with words, to uſe an expreſſion of my lord BACON, was eſtabliſhed: and when that, which this great man applies to philoſophical knowledge, might be ſaid truly of theological, that it became "an undigeſted heap and col-"lection of much faith and accident, mixed with an abund-"ance of childiſh notions imbibed in youth."

IF we conſider what motives our reformers, who boaſted of reſtoring the purity of chriſtianity, could have to keep open thoſe ſprings from which ſo much of the impurity of that church,

[a] N.B. ERASMUS would make JEROM almoſt an Italian, becauſe Stridon, the place of his birth, was not far from Italy. But he may be reckoned more properly an Hungarian; ſince this place was on the very confines of Hungary and Dalmatia.

ſhould be ſtripped of many rites, ceremonies, and cuſtoms which ſavoured too ſtrongly of heatheniſm and judaiſm, or which had been invented manifeſtly with no other intention, than that of multiplying ſuperſtitions, which helped to impoſe on the people, and were lucrative to the prieſts. The worſhip of images was of this number; a worſhip evidently derived from the heathens; as idolatrous among the vulgar, and not more eaſily diſtinguiſhed out of idolatry by the learned men

church, whoſe communion they renounced, had been derived; we ſhall find, I think, that they were two; antient prejudices, and future hopes. They were averſe to unlearn what they had been learning all their lives; and they were deſirous to retain that pre-eminence, authority, and wealth, which they had enjoyed under the pope, and hoped to enjoy under the king. The church of Rome acts conſiſtently, when ſhe maintains a veneration for the primitive fathers, who maintained the divine inſtitution of an eccleſiaſtical order, and who invented ſo much ſuperſtitious worſhip, and ſo many ſham miracles, to eſtabliſh a ſham chriſtianity. But what could proteſtants mean to maintain the authority of theſe antient fathers, if they had not all the ſame purpoſes to ſerve? Let us acknowledge the truth. They had them not in the whole, but they had them in part: and for this reaſon they found it neceſſary to preſerve the credit of fathers and councils in part at leaſt, and as far, as they wanted their authority. When they wanted it no longer, or when it turned againſt them, they laid it aſide moſt prudently. They builded up a new church, or modelled an old one, on principles, however inconſiſtent, that reconciled, in good meaſure, the eccleſiaſtical to the civil policy of their age and country: and they, who thought that an hierarchy and a monarchy were neceſſary to ſupport one another, which was the prevalent opinion of thoſe times, could not have deſired a more reaſonable inſtitution, than that which our Engliſh reformers made, under the direction, and by the authority, of the civil power.

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of new, than of old, Rome. Such again was the uſe of holy water, which your divines chuſe to derive from the water of purification in uſe among the Jews, and which might be derived as truly, perhaps, from the luſtral water in uſe among the heathens. Such again were the conſecration of altars, the celebration of jubilees, and other external obſervances, which had been ſo avowedly taken from the ceremonial law of the Jews, that your writers do not ſcruple to juſtify them by paſſages of the pentateuch. In fine, and to quote an inſtance or two of the ſecond ſort; ſuch was the invention of purgatory, and of all the coſtly means to be delivered from it. Such was the abuſe they made even of tranſubſtantiation, which is ſo great an abuſe in itſelf that one would hardly think it could be abuſed by any additional circumſtances, when it was eſtabliſhed not only that prieſts could make God at any time, but that they might carry him about in a little box, whereever his preſence was deemed neceſſary for public ſhew, or private devotion.

As the reformation exploded the doctrines relative to theſe and other ſuperſtitious practices, ſo would it have been much to the good of mankind, as well as to the honor of chriſtianity, if ſilence on ſeveral others, which cauſe great diſſention, had been impoſed at the ſame time. But the contrary happened. The reformed fell out among themſelves, and purſued one another with ſo much bitterneſs, that they gave no ſmall color

to

to the pretended catholics, to object to them that they multiplied ſchiſms, broke the bands of chriſtian charity, and diſturbed the peace of the chriſtian world, which was better preſerved in the communion of Rome. I do not mean to ſpeak here of the diſputes that aroſe among the reformed about religious ceremonies and church-government, which were eaſy enough to be determined, or indifferent enough to be compounded, in their nature; how hard ſoever, or how important ſoever eccleſiaſtical obſtinacy and the ſpirit of party made them appear: I mean to ſpeak of thoſe diſputes that are in their nature not determinable, becauſe there neither is, nor can be, any real determination of ideas about them: diſputes, that would be little thought of, or could do little hurt, if they remained undecided, and have done ſo much by dogmatical and contrary deciſions. I might inſtance in ſeveral, in that of juſtification particularly, and of the doctrines dependent on it, concerning all which ſo much unintelligible jargon has been vainly employed by popiſh and proteſtant divines, and to as little purpoſe by the council of Trent. But I chuſe rather to inſtance in the caſe of the Lord's ſupper. Of this we have ſpoken already, and it will ſerve better, than any caſe leſs known, to ſhew in what manner the reformers raiſed new diſputes, left their followers expoſed to all the miſchief which theological queſtions have brought on the world, and the atheiſtical objection as much in force as it was before the reformation they made.

THEY were not content, then, to have rendered tranſubſtantiation as ridiculous and odious as it deſerves to be eſteemed: they went about to explain, each in his own way, this ſuppoſed or real myſtery. They who believed there was no myſtery in the euchariſty itſelf, how myſterious ſoever the occaſion of this inſtitution and the ſpiritual effects of it might be, ſhould have talked, I think, of the bread as bread, and of the wine as wine, which Chriſtians ate and drank in their communion to commemorate, by this ceremony, the death of CHRIST, and the redemption of mankind. They who believed there was a myſtery in the euchariſty itſelf, and that the bread and wine were, after thankſgiving or conſecration, ſomething more than bread and wine, nor barely ſigns or ſymbols of the body and blood of CHRIST, ſhould have avoided all definitions, inſtead of oppoſing definition to definition, and making that a myſtery which CHRIST had not made ſo. But they proceeded in a manner very different. They all acknowledged, if ZWINGLIUS did, that the body and blood of CHRIST were truly received in this ſacrament, as the landgrave of Heſſe declared to GRANVELLE and others in a ſolemn conference at Spire*: and by this acknowledgment they put themſelves under inextricable difficulties. LUTHER taught that the body and blood of CHRIST were really in the elements of bread and wine, by a conſubſtantiation, which was ſaid to

* Vid. SLEIDAN Lib. xvii.

laſt,

laſt, if I miſtake not, during the manducation only. Did the Calviniſts talk a whit more intelligibly when they profeſſed, at the famous conference at Poiſſy, "that in the ſacrament of the "Lord's ſupper, CHRIST gives, preſents, and "exhibits to us really the ſubſtance of his body "and blood: that by faith we receive, really "and in fact, the true and natural body and "blood of CHRIST, by virtue of the Holy "Ghoſt*?" What did BEZA mean when he talked of eating with the mouth of faith? He muſt mean that he believed that he ate, or he muſt mean nothing. Now what did he believe that he ate in the ſame ſacrament? Not the ſymbolical body of CHRIST; for he affirmed that he ate the true and natural body: not the true and natural body of CHRIST; for he affirmed that to be in heaven and no where elſe. What then did he believe that he ate, or what other ſenſe can be put on thoſe words, "eating with the mouth of "faith," and thoſe "receiving by faith," than that of believing he ate, and believing he received? His adverſaries held a great impiety, but they held it conſiſtently. According to them, the body of CHRIST was in the ſacrament by the charm of conſecration, and they ate it when they ate the ſacramental bread. According to BEZA and his collegues, the body of CHRIST was not there, but in heaven; and yet they ate it too, really and in fact. This conference broke up abruptly. The fools on one ſide accuſed the pro-

* AUBIGNY Hiſt. univerſ. Lib. ii.

teſtants

teſtants of blaſpheming when they deny tranſubſtantiation, juſt as the heathen reputed thoſe philoſophers atheiſts who were not polytheiſts. The fools on the other remained convinced that they ate, ſpiritually and with the mouth of faith, in this ſacrament, a bodily ſubſtance that was not there; whilſt they ate moſt corporeally a bodily ſubſtance, the bread, that was there. Both went away reſolved to cut the throats of one another: and ſuch are the effects of theology, that is, of human authority, in matters of religion.

THIS authority has impoſed chiefly, when it has impoſed, on the minds of men by the abuſe of words. This abuſe of words makes the ſum of metaphyſics and theology; imaginary ſciences, removed from the controll, as from the aſſiſtance, of ſenſe, converſant about hypothetical natures, and about ideas vaſtly complicated and perplexed. Such theology tinctured all the philoſophy of PLATO; logic all that of ARISTOTLE. Theſe two ſchools were the great mints of inſignificant terms; and tho ZENO, who did little elſe than invent new words, and change the application of old, opened another mint of the ſame kind, yet the coin of the two former has been alone current. The immaterial forms, the eternal ideas, and all the incorporeal eſſences of PLATO, for inſtance, were given and received in every philoſophical payment, like the ſubſtantial forms, the intentional ſpecies, or the entelechy of ARISTOTLE, till very lately.

I HAVE often thought that nothing could have happened more fortunately for the propagation of learned ignorance, than the ſucceſſion of the peripatetic to the platonic philoſophy; for tho ARISTOTLE oppoſed many opinions of his maſter, yet the ſubtilty of his logic has ſerved to cover both his maſter's errors and his own, on more occaſions, and at more periods, than one. No writings, certainly, were ever ſo mad as thoſe of the latter Platoniſts, which contain the very quinteſſence of enthuſiaſm, and which are almoſt one perpetual abuſe of reaſon and language. Many of the chriſtian fathers came out of the ſame ſchools; and all of them uſing the ſame delirious ſtyle, it became that of chriſtian theology. We muſt not imagine, however, that the philoſophy of ARISTOTLE had no ſhare in framing the ſyſtem of this theology, tho that of PLATO had the greateſt and the earlieſt. It is true that the original works of the former were unknown in the weſtern church till the fifteenth century, when greek learning was brought into Italy by thoſe who fled thither after the taking of Conſtantinople. But ſtill ARISTOTLE was at that time rather ill known, than unknown; for in the very beginning of the thirteenth a latin tranſlation had been made, by the direction of the emperor FREDERIC the ſecond, of ſome parts of his writings from the arabic verſion of them: and other fragments had appeared in the ſame language, ſuch as might be expected, in thoſe ages of ignorance, from men, among

among whom the latin and greek were become very barbarous languages, who underſtood ill the purity of one, and were little able to explain themſelves properly and clearly in the other. If we go higher up, we find ARISTOTLE much better known. He muſt have been ſo even by the firſt of the greek fathers; and his reputation muſt have been great during all thoſe ages wherein ſo many of the corner-ſtones of chriſtian theology were laid; ſince he had commentators, themſelves philoſophers of great fame, among the Greeks, in the ſecond, the third, the fourth, and the fifth centuries, ALEXANDER APHRODISAEUS, THEMISTIUS, and others. No doubt can be made of this; and if any doubt could be made, thoſe nice diſtinctions, and that perpetual torture of words, for which fathers and councils were ſo famous, would be ſufficient to prove it. They learned of PLATO to talk without any meaning: and they learned, I think, of ARISTOTLE to ſeem ſometimes to have one.

THE logical empire of ARISTOTLE, and the abuſe of words, grew up with chriſtian theology: but they were never abſolutely confirmed till ignorance prevailed alike in the eaſt and the weſt, from the ninth to the fifteenth century, when the firſt dawnings of knowledge began to appear, and men began to ſee their way in the farther acquiſition of it. It may ſeem ſtrange, but it is true, that the ſchools which were erected, and the en-

couragement which was given to learning, from the days of CHARLES the great, ſerved only to keep men out of the way of true knowledge, and to impoſe a falſe appearance of it. The popes had procured chiefly the foundations of theſe ſchools: and the encouragement to the ſcholars had been derived from them, or through their means. I might have reckoned this among the artifices they employed to carry on their uſurpations. Bare ignorance alone was not ſufficient to their purpoſe. It was neceſſary to promote learned ignorance, and to eſtabliſh error, with all the circumſtances of authority and reverence; leſt even the ignorant ſhould ſtumble upon truth. To keep men from the ſearch of it, they were told, that truth, and divine truths eſpecially, were hard to find; that perſons, on whoſe ability they might depend, were ſet apart, therefore, to ſave others the trouble of this ſearch; and that their holy mother, the church, watched over all. Thus revelation and reaſon both were made the monopoly of the clergy. They doled out the former in ſuch ſcraps, and under ſuch interpretations, as they thought fit. They employed the latter, not to analyſe not to verify, ideas, in order to compare them, but to take ſuch as have been mentioned above, as it were on truſt, like the vile inſtruments of error: the inſtruments of error indeed, ſince, how well ſoever theſe compariſons were made, nothing that was true, or complete and adequate, or diſtinct and clear, could reſult from

from them; and nothing, conſequently, that deſerved the name of knowledge. In ſhort, they profaned and abuſed the two nobleſt gifts of God to man, natural reaſon and ſupernatural revelation.

NATURAL philoſophy and mathematics made little progreſs in theſe ſchools; experimental philoſophy none at all. To turn and to wind the few notions they had a thouſand ways, to diſtinguiſh imperceptible differences, to refine and ſubtiliſe a little real knowledge till it evaporated entirely, and nothing remained but a caput mortuum of words, was their whole buſineſs. JOHN of Damaſcus had brought logic into faſhion among the greek divines, and BOETIUS among the latins, long before the inſtitution of theſe ſchools, and longer ſtill before their doctors became famous under the name of ſcholaſtics: ſo that whenever this happened, the ſame manner of philoſophiſing on logical and metaphyſical notions, on technical and inſignificant terms, had prevailed in them from their foundation, and had been applied to theology. The men, who applied themſelves to it, had ſome broken and ſuperficial acquaintance with ARISTOTLE at ſecond hand, as we have obſerved that they might, and even at third hand; for much of it came to them through his arabian interpreters and commentators: and as in every other ſcience, ſo in theology, they were ſervilely attached to his principles and to his method. Some have placed LANFRANC, arch-

biſhop of Canterbury, at the head of the ſcholaſtic tribe, in the order of time: and if he wrote againſt BERENGER, in the middle of the eleventh century, we may aſſure ourſelves that ARISTOTLE's philoſophy was employed then, as it has been ſince, to account for CHRIST's corporeal preſence in the ſacrament. It has been ſaid, I know, that PETER the Lombard, a famous ſcholaſtic in the next century to LANFRANC, imitated and followed JOHN of Damaſcus; tho ERASMUS and others have made a doubt whether he was the author of that work, which procured him the name of Maſter of the ſentences. But ſuch criticiſms are trifling, as well as uncertain: for whether this writer, or his predeceſſor LANFRANC, imitated JOHN of Damaſcus, or no; and whether PETER the Lombard, or ABELARD, compiled the Sentences, their theology was that of their age and of theſe ſchools, and their method was derived ultimately from ARISTOTLE.

THESE ſchools continued in great fame, and produced in every age, during the courſe of many, a multitude of writers, ſome of whom were men of ſuch extraordinary genius, that they might have enlightened, like ſo many ſuns, the orb of learning, and have carried human knowledge to the utmoſt bounds of human capacity. But, inſtead of this, they ſerved, like ſo many ignes fatui, to lead men backwards and forwards through the briars and thorns of vain ſpeculations, within the narrow bounds that ARISTOTLE ſet; as if truth

truth was not to be found out of theſe. They checked the growth of true philoſophy by bringing into it no new materials from nature: and they corrupted true religion by blending their philoſophical ſpeculations, and the vain ſubtilties of their logic, with divine truths. They thought that ARISTOTLE had left a moſt complete and perfect ſyſtem of philoſophy: but they ſeemed to think that CHRIST had left an incomplete and imperfect ſyſtem of religion. To ſupply theſe defects, they made ſummaries of chriſtian theology, to ſay nothing of ſentences of the fathers and tedious commentaries on them, of commentaries on the bible *, of theological queſtions and caſes of conſcience, that are much larger than all the ſcriptures canonical and apocryphal, and in compariſon of which the goſpels, nay the whole New Teſtament is but a pocket-book: tho the pocket-book ought to contain every one of theſe folios, and none of them are excuſable for containing more than the pocket-book. I have touched ſo often already the abſurdity, and, as I think, the iniquity, of ſeeking chriſtianity out of the goſpel, of making any criterion of natural religion but the works, or any criterion of revealed religion but the word, of God, that I ſhould ſay nothing here concerning the laſt, if I had not often found an anſwer to it inſiſted on with a ſilly air of triumph, by dogmatical perſons in their converſation,

* N. B. The expoſition of St. MATTHEW's goſpel takes up, I think, ninety homilies, and that of St. JOHN eighty ſeven, in the works of CHRYSOSTOM.

and in writing. What do you complain of, ſay theſe perſons? Is not the ſyſtem of chriſtianity in the ſame caſe with every other ſyſtem, of laws particularly? Yes; and that is the very thing I complain of. A ſyſtem of human law and human policy is the product of human underſtanding; and therefore incomplete and imperfect, liable to different conſtructions at all times, and fit to be altered at ſome. But this cannot be ſaid, without blaſphemy, of the chriſtian diſpenſation; tho it has been muttered by ſome divines, and has been ſtrongly implied by the whole conduct of the chriſtian church. What is made by man may be explained, ſupplied, altered, and improved by man. But has the word of God, ſpoken to all mankind, need to be explained by any man, or by any order of men, who have as little pretence to be thought inſpired, as thoſe who are not of their order? Can any human authority ſupply, or alter, and much leſs improve, what the Son of God, God himſelf, came on earth to reveal? Again: is there no difference between my being led into error by human authority which I know to be human, and by human authority which I take to be divine? To take the laws of God for the laws of man, is impious: but is it leſs ſo, to impoſe the laws of man for the laws of God? Surely it is much more ſo: as one may be impiety without deſign, and the other muſt be premeditated.

It is notorious that many great points of chriſtian faith

faith and doctrine were firſt taught, or firſt determined, ſeveral ages after the immediate diſciples of CHRIST were dead, on the authority of tradition alone, till there was a canon of ſcriptures; and on tradition and them, when there was one. The trinity, the co-eternity, the co-equality, in a word the ſameneſs, of the Son with the Father, the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt from the Father and the Son, the fires of purgatory, and the real corporeal preſence of CHRIST in the euchariſty, to mention no more, were of this number. It was lawful to diſpute about them all, till the church had decided. Nay ERASMUS* is ſo indulgent as to doubt if it was heretical in ORIGEN, to make a queſtion whether "the Son and the Holy Ghoſt are of the "ſame divine eſſence with the Father, or whether "they are only creatures more excellent than all "other creatures." After the church, that is, certain aſſemblies of eccleſiaſtics, had decided and decreed, "poſt evulgatam eccleſiae ſententiam," it was lawful to doubt no longer, nor to diſpute about any of theſe points, "ambigere fas non "eſt." They were become articles of faith. They were made ſuch, then, by theſe deciſions and decrees. They were made ſuch, then, by human authority. Not at all, ſays ERASMUS, or any other divine: they were made ſuch by the ſcriptures. Whatever is not agreeable to them, is not of CHRIST†; and therefore falſe interpretations of the ſcriptures are to be rectified by ſuch as are

* Symb. catech. ivtæ.

† Quod aberrat a ſacris voluminibus, non eſt CHRISTI. Ibid.

true.

true *. Now thoſe which the church makes are true: and it is enough for you, and ſuch as you are, to believe firmly all that the church has declared to be neceſſary †. Roundly aſſerted indeed, but very fallaciouſly argued; for whether the interpretations of the church are true, which is aſſumed, or whether they are falſe, which is poſſible, the doctrines eſtabliſhed on them are eſtabliſhed on human, not on divine, authority. The ſcripture is the word of God: the interpretation is the word of man. But, beſides, I learn from that judicious and orthodox divine Mr. HOOKER ‡, and ERASMUS and others of the ſame tribe ſpeak to the ſame effect, that all the things neceſſary to ſalvation are not neceſſary to be contained, and ſet down in plain terms, in the ſcriptures. It is ſufficient that they be comprehended in ſuch ſort, that by reaſon we may conclude from the ſcriptures all things which are neceſſary: from whence I conclude, juſt as I did before, that the great points ſpoken of have been eſtabliſhed on human, not on divine, authority; deduced, collected by reaſon, or what has been called reaſon, not expreſſly taught by revelation.

THAT theſe great points of chriſtian faith and doctrine were not very evidently deduced, nor very

* Falſa ſcripturarum interpretatio vera interpretatione refutanda eſt. Symb. catech. iv^ta.

† Tibi tuique ſimilibus ſatis eſt ea conſtanti tenere fide, quae pro neceſſariis exſerte et expreſſe tradidit eccleſia. Ibid.

‡ Eccleſiaſtical Polity, lib. i.

accurately

accurately collected, from the ſcriptures, may be preſumed from the diſputes that have been always, and that ſtill ſubſiſt, about them. It might be proved too that ſcripture is not ſo favorable in many caſes, nor more ſo in any one, to theſe opinions, than to thoſe that ſtand in oppoſition to them; and that the only advantage, which the Athanaſians or the Auguſtinians, for inſtance, have over the Arians or the Semi-pelagians, is not an advantage which the ſcripture gives them. They derive it from the ſuffrages of particular men, whoſe motives were often not entirely chriſtian, and from the arbitrary dogmas of fathers, and decrees of councils. Theſe opinions, therefore, that are become articles of faith, and that paſs for ſome of the doctrines which CHRIST taught, tho they are nothing more than inventions of fathers improved by ſchoolmen, may be quoted as ſo many particular inſtances of theological preſumption, and, I think, impiety *. But call it which you

* THERE have been ſome divines a little more modeſt than others, ſince there are ſome, I think, who have ſeemed aſhamed of their artificial theology, and have endeavoured to excuſe rather, than defend, the fathers of their church. The fathers, it has been ſaid, taught the doctrines of chriſtianity in their genuine purity, and affected to teach them no otherwiſe. The heretics forced them to abandon this pious reſerve, in order to defeat the deſigns of theſe men, who attempted daily to introduce errors in opinion and practice. Now if this was their caſe in general, it may have been ſuch even of St. PAUL, who was the father of the fathers; and his goſpel may have been writ in the ſame ſpirit of contradiction and of diſpute. But it is impoſſible to diſcover, with certainty, on what points, and in what degrees, artificial theology gave occaſion to hereſy, or

you pleaſe, or what you pleaſe, the proceeding grew more general and more ſyſtematical in the ſchools that have been mentioned. They did not take this licence with particular points of doctrine alone, but with the whole ſyſtem of chriſtianity. They melted down the whole maſs with all the alloy that had been already added to it by others, and they caſt it anew with an immenſe deal of their own. They made it ſo voluminous, that it was no longer uſeful: and ERASMUS might well ſay, "Quis poſſit AQUINATIS ſecundae ſecundam cir-"cumferre *?" They perplexed it with ſo many bold and indeterminable queſtions about the di-

or hereſy to artificial theology; tho we know, in ſome meaſure, what the diſputes were, that aroſe in the chriſtian church. The doctrines that were termed afterwards orthodox, or heretical, were in their origin, no doubt, co-eval, and both grew up together, till one outgrew the other. In general the orthodox fathers had no advantage over the others. If the former had recourſe to tradition, ſo had the latter: and the former were not, certainly, ſuperior to the latter either in learning, or in means of knowledge, or in ſanctity of life; great foundations of credibility in ſuch caſes as theſe. ARIUS, for inſtance, or NESTORIUS, to mention no more, were in all theſe reſpects at leaſt equal to ATHANASIUS or CYRIL: and whoever examines the partial accounts of one ſide alone, for we have none of the other, of all that paſſed in the diſputes that aroſe whether the Son was conſubſtantial with the Father, and whether the virgin MARY was properly the mother of God, will find great reaſon to believe that the two heretics were not the leaſt reſpectable doctors of the four. Thus we ſhall be apt to think, if we conſult not only antient memorials, but the writings of modern divines, and ſuffer ourſelves neither to be amuſed by arbitrary epithets and vague declamations, in which the modern imitate the antient fathers, nor to be perplexed by ſophiſtical arguments, in which they ſometimes imitate the ſchoolmen.

* Ep. CCCXXIX.

vine

vine nature and operations, with ſo many ſerious trifles, with ſo many minute queſtions about formalities, quidities, and other fantaſtical notions, that it grew contentious, and more than ever hurtful. In ſhort, they multiplied diſtinctions and definitions till their manner became as unintelligible as their matter: and my lord BACON might have added ſcholaſtic theology to the ſciences that ſway the imagination more than the reaſon, ſuch as aſtrology, natural magic, and alchemy. If the firſt pretends to diſcover the influence of ſuperior or inferior bodies, this theology pretended to diſcover the influence of ſuperior on inferior ſpirits, by illuminations, inſpirations, and the internal action of grace. If the ſecond pretends to reduce natural philoſophy from ſpeculation to works, this theology pretended to deduce the duties of man from ſpeculations concerning the moral attributes of God, and to inſtruct him in the imitation of God. If the third pretends to ſeparate diſſimilar, and to throw out heterogeneous, parts of bodies, to cleanſe ſuch as are impure, and to perfect ſuch as are immature, this theology pretended to perform much the ſame operations on ideas, notions, terms. Theſe the profeſſors of it confounded, and diſtinguiſhed, at their pleaſure; and, like chemiſts or apothecaries, made new out of old, old out of new, one out of many, and many out of one*. Nay this compariſon may be carried

* —— Pharmacopolarum ritu, ex novis vetera, ex veteribus nova, e pluribus unum, ex uno plura ſubinde fingentium et refingentium. ERAS. ibid.

farther.

farther. The ſcholaſtic divines rendered their art, for ſuch it was rather than a ſcience, as incomprehenſible as they could, that they might make a greater profit, and acquire a greater reputation, by it among the ignorant.

In this manner, and by the help of theſe ſchools, a theological ſyſtem, which had no intention to promote the true and holy purpoſes of chriſtianity, was impoſed on an ignorant and ſuperſtitious world for the very religion which CHRIST had inſtituted, and his diſciples had propagated. The ſole intention, and the ſole effect of it was to eſtabliſh an eccleſiaſtical empire under that ſpiritual monarch the pope, and his ſpiritual miniſters the clergy. This was the effect, of that ſuppoſed alliance between the church and the ſtate: an effect ſo natural, that he who pleads for any right in a church, or eccleſiaſtical order, independent on the ſtate, may be juſtly ſuppoſed to mean this effect in ſome degree, and under ſome form or other. The firſt foundations of this empire were laid in private, the ſecond only in public, conſcience. To ſecure this empire, therefore, it was neceſſary to keep the firſt entirely and excluſively in the hands of the pope and the clergy; and, whatever influence the civil power might on ſome occaſions gain over the latter, to take effectual care that it ſhould never be able to gain any over the former. Now nothing either did, or could, contribute more to this great principle of policy, than the conduct of theſe ſchools. By wrapping up

up both natural and revealed religion in the obſcurity of metaphyſics and of logic, they made themſelves the ſole judges of both. By ſending abroad their diſciples under the characters of confeſſors, directors, caſuiſts, inquiſitors, preachers, they had ſure means of exerciſing their judgments, inſtilling what opinions, and raiſing what paſſions, the permanent and occaſional, the immediate or remote, intereſts of the church required. The firſt duty of the religion theſe doctors propagated was to believe what the church believed: and what the church believed, they alone had a right to declare. The ſecond duty of this religion was to obſerve all the ceremonies, and to perform all the external acts of devotion and worſhip that the church had inſtituted, or ſhould inſtitute. The third and leaſt was the practice of morality. On the firſt there was no mitigation nor indulgence. Men were to believe implicitly, or to be treated as enemies to God and to his church in this world, and to be damned eternally in the other. On the ſecond and the third much indulgence was ſhewn. It was even profuſe on the third. Compoſitions with the church might be made on both, on the breach of her own laws, and on the breach of thoſe of God and nature: and theſe compoſitions were ſo often pecuniary, eſpecially on the breach of the laſt, that, whilſt the church was enriched, no layman, who had money enough to ſave his ſoul, could be damned. But there was ſomething ſtill more favorable to vice in the laſt caſe. The duties which the church exacted were ſo particular that they

could not, and they coſt ſo little to perform that they did not, deſerve to be explained away. But the duties of morality were more general, and more liable, by variety of circumſtances, to different modifications in the application of them, as they were much harder to be obſerved ſtrictly amidſt the infirmities of human nature. Caſuiſts therefore interpoſed. They lightened the burden in favor of theſe infirmities, by all the definitions, diſtinctions, and exceptions that logic could furniſh. They did more. In all caſes where the church was concerned, they gave full range to the paſſions of mankind. Juſtice was no longer a moral virtue. Faith was not to be kept with heretics. Benevolence or charity were no longer principles of natural or revealed religion. Heretics or excommunicated perſons were to be perſecuted and exterminated with the moſt unrelenting fury: and I may defy any man to ſhew inſtances of greater inhumanity, and more profligate wickedneſs, committed by the ferocity of lawleſs ſavages, or barbarous nations, than I am able to ſhew of thoſe which have been committed, not only under the veil of this ſpurious chriſtianity, but on motives taken from it, and at the inſtigation of thoſe who taught it. By ſuch means, and with ſuch effects, as theſe, was an eccleſiaſtical empire maintained during ſeveral ages, whilſt churchmen governed conſcience of every kind, and by governing conſcience governed the world.

The ſcholaſtics had indeed many conteſts among themſelves,

themſelves, that were carried on with great animoſity, and broke out ſometimes into open violence. Such, for inſtance, was the diſpute between the Thomiſts and the Scotiſts about the immaculate conception of the virgin; and that between the hominaliſts and the realiſts about the nature of univerſals. How could theſe diſputes, or any other, be determined among men, whoſe pleaſure and whoſe pride it was to diſpute perpetually, and who cultivated an art that was of uſe to no man in the diſcernment of truth, but might help the ſubtil dialectician to poſe even the man he could not refute? Theſe diſputes, however, were kept among themſelves, by the policy, not by the moderation of ſcholaſtics certainly: and as long as they neither rent the theological ſyſtem, nor ſhook the eccleſiaſtical empire, the court of Rome tempered, managed, and ſuffered them, notwithſtanding all the ſcandals they occaſioned, in the univerſities of Oxford and of Paris particularly. But as ſoon as our OCKHAM, the invincible doctor, began to maintain that the eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction ought to be ſubject to the civil, the nominaliſts were reputed heretics, and the realiſts alone paſſed for orthodox. There was as little union among theſe, as among the others; and religion might ſeem to be more nearly concerned in their diſputes. But, the great purpoſe, for which all theſe ſchools were erected, being the ſupport of the eccleſiaſtical empire, any doctrines, that reduced or weakened it, were the greateſt of hereſies. This happened in the fourteenth century,

when WICKLEF went much farther than OCKHAM, and laid the ax to the root of a tree, which the popes had watered with ſo much care and expence, and which bore ſo much bitter fruit: ſo that, if the impertinent philoſophy and profane theology of the ſchools took their riſe in our country from LANFRANC, RUCCELINE, SWINESHEAD, and OCKHAM, we may boaſt that ſome of the firſt and greateſt advances towards a reformation of both were made by men of our country likewiſe.

FROM the time that OCKHAM had ſignaliſed himſelf, in a public diſpute at Avignon, in favor of the emperors and the civil power, againſt the popes and the eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction, the nominaliſts were not only more than ever oppoſed by the other ſcholaſtics, the Scotiſts eſpecially, but ſo perſecuted by the court of Rome, and all the fautors of her uſurpations, that their whole doctrine was condemned by LEWIS the eleventh in a public edict before the end of the fifteenth century *. The doctors and maſters of the univerſity of Paris, for the ſcholaſtics too, as well as the rabbins, had the title of maſters, were obliged to renounce the name, with the doctrine, of that ſect; and all their books were burnt, according to the laudable precaution of the orthodox. The realiſts, on the other ſide, were recommended: and nothing was neglected on this and every other occaſion, that might keep theſe ſchools firmly attached to a cauſe, which they had been principal inſtruments

* MORHOF Polyhiſt.

of

of impoſing on the world for the cauſe of chriſtian religion. Theſe efforts, however, proved inſufficient. The papal throne was ſhook, and eccleſiaſtical empire was in a viſible decline. Scholaſtic divines had ſupported it in the opinion of mankind, as long as they were favored by general ignorance, even greater than their own. But as ſoon as learning began to dawn, towards the beginning of the ſixteenth century, theſe birds of night were forced to fly from day, tho they ſcreeched and clapped their wings for a while. It was in vain that modern ſcholaſtics proſtituted learning, as their predeceſſors had proſtituted genius, to maintain the credit of this theology, and the papal authority connected with it. The taſk was too hard even for the council of Trent, and for all the great men who have undertaken it ſince. Nothing ſupports the ſyſtem now, except general ignorance in ſome countries, and the force of civil, abetting eccleſiaſtical, power, on principles of political conſideration among thoſe who are not ignorant. Many a man thinks, many ſuch I have known, that the theology of the ſchools is abſurd, that the monarchy of the pope, tho reduced, is ſtill impertinent and hurtful, and that the abuſes of wealth and power in the church are intolerable. But yet the ſame man will contend that it is better to bear, than to attempt a reformation of, evils that are grown inveterate: and will think that he is ſtrong when he quotes not only the diſorders, the wars, and the maſſacres, which attended and followed the reformation in the ſixteenth century, but

the ſeveral ridiculous and mad ſects, to the riſe of which this reformation gave occaſion, tho the reformers condemned them.

I HAVE heard men of good parts and good intentions reaſon in this manner: I have heard it ſaid by a very reſpectable man in the gallican church, when he excuſed rather, than defended, ſubmiſſion to the papal power, that this power is the key-ſtone of that arch whereon the whole chriſtian ſyſtem reſts, and that the whole building muſt fall if the key-ſtone be taken away. I have heard another of the ſame church, and of the ſame character, advance, that many things abſurd in belief, and ridiculous in practice, were neceſſary to attach the greateſt number of men and women, and eſpecially of the vulgar, to chriſtianity; that men of ſenſe and knowledge aſcribed to theſe doctrines and inſtitutions as little as they deſerved; but that men of ſenſe and knowledge ought to conſider and diſtinguiſh what is for them, and what for the vulgar; that this cannot be done in outward profeſſion, but that every man of ſenſe and knowledge may do it for himſelf, and ſhould therefore bear with an uſeful deception. Much may be ſaid in favor of this political reaſoning, and much may be ſaid againſt it. It might have been better, perhaps, if it had been practicable, to reform as ERASMUS would have done, than as LUTHER did. I ſhall not enter into the controverſy; but this I ſay: Such inſtances, as have been given, confirm the whole drift of this eſſay, becauſe they ſhew the miſchievous

miſchievous conſequences of theology, by which an order of men have been able to uſurp on God, if I may uſe the expreſſion, as well as on man; to propagate their own inventions for his revelations; and to aſſume an authority, to which they have no right, over all the other orders of ſociety, till the fraud and the uſurpation were ſo eſtabliſhed, that it was not poſſible to reject them without falling into ſome of theſe calamities which the eſtabliſhment of them had coſt mankind. A melancholy alternative ſurely: and yet ſuch an one, that the love of truth, the ſpirit of liberty, and an awful reſpect for the Supreme Being, ought to determine men to take their reſolution in it. When LUTHER and CALVIN, and the other reformers, took this reſolution, it muſt not be denied that affections and paſſions, and private intereſts, had their ſhare, as well as the other motives, in determining them to it. Such will be the caſe in all human enterpriſes, even in the beſt: and therefore the iſſues even of the beſt are always imperfect. Our reformers ſhook off entirely the papal yoke, they laid aſide and expoſed many falſe traditions and unchriſtian doctrines. But our reformers had ſome of the prejudices, and much of the ſpirit, of the ſchools about them: and he * was not in the wrong, perhaps, who made the ſcholaſtic chronology begin at LANFRANC and end at LUTHER; tho many of your divines and of ours have talked the ſame gibberiſh ſince, and talk it ſtill.

* MORHOF Polyhiſt.

MAY we not compare the great revolution which happened in the roman church, to that which happened in the roman empire? The empire broke to pieces, ſome of the provinces became diſtinct ſtates, aſſerted their independency, and acknowledged no longer the imperial authority, nor the laws of the empire. But in all theſe new conſtitutions there was ſome tincture of the old, ſome principles of law, and ſome of policy, which bore a near reſemblance to it. Thus, in the conſtitutions of our reformed churches, tho they were independent on that of Rome, ſomething remained to ſhew that they had been once members of that body, as much as they differed now in doctrine and diſcipline. The church of Rome ſhut up the bible from the laity. The reformed churches opened it, and declared that the pure word of God was the ſole teſt of true religion, and the ſole foundation of theirs. That it is the true, the ſole, and the ſufficient teſt of chriſtian religion muſt be owned; for if it was not, it could not be the word of God, nor chriſtianity the religion of God. But it is certain that this word has been made the ſole foundation of our reformed religions? I apprehend it is not. Nay, ſince, to ſpeak properly, I muſt ſay religions, it cannot have been made ſuch. The word of God is one, and one religion alone can be taught by it. If there are different religions raiſed, there muſt have been different foundations laid. How are we to account for this? We muſt acknowledge the truth. Human authority has paſſed for divine,

divine, tho not ſo coercively in our churches, as in yours; and the uncertain, variable word of man for the infallible, invariable word of God. We freed ourſelves from ſpiritual tyranny, and we fell into ſpiritual anarchy. The change, however, was advantageous; ſince there is, in the nature of things, and has been in this caſe, a tranſition, through confuſion, into order; whereas there is no immediate tranſition from eſtabliſhed tyranny into a ſettled ſtate of liberty.

BEFORE the reformation, Chriſtians knew nothing of the bible more than the church told them. It might, or it might not, be a rule to the paſtors: but it was none to the flocks. After the reformation, it was put into the hands of every one. The paſtors appealed to it, and the flocks were ſuppoſed to judge for themſelves by it. What happened? The very ſame thing that happened in the primitive church before any canon of ſcripture was made by public authority, and received by common conſent. Various traditions and various doctrines of men, who pretended alike to the gifts of the Spirit, divided the faithful: and every teacher had his followers. Juſt ſo at the reformation, various interpretations of authentic ſcriptures, and various comments upon them, divided the reformers and the reformed. Every teacher had his followers: and ſome of theſe affected to preach, as well as pray, by the Spirit. Ambiguous and obſcure expreſſions in the text had the ſame effect as no text at all: and modern theology broke the uni-

formity of religion as much as antient, cauſed as much deſolation, and ſpilled as much blood. The reformed churches perſecuted one another, and your church perſecuted them all. Atheiſtical perſons, therefore, continue to take the pretence, which every religion gives them, to confound religion and theology, and to aſcribe to the former all the evils that are due to the latter.

IT is natural to aſk, can nothing be done to remove this ſcandal by putting an end to theſe evils? I will preſume to anſwer, Nothing; unleſs men can be prevailed upon to aſſume the ſpirit of chriſtianity, as well as the name of Chriſtians: and this will be found, I ſuppoſe, impracticable as long as the ſole care of religion, and the ſole direction of conſcience, is confined every where to a diſtinct order of men, whoſe diſtinct intereſts, and whoſe paſſions of courſe, carry them to keep theſe diſſenſions and feuds alive. If they were content to explain what they underſtand, to adore what they underſtand not, to leave in myſtery all that CHRIST and his apoſtles have left ſo, to a time that is not yet come, and to teach others to content themſelves with natural theology, and ſuch revealed theology as this; the evils ſpoken of would ſoon ceaſe, and the ſcandal conſequently. If they proceeded in this manner, there would be ample matter left to employ their tongues and their pens, and none to employ the ſwords and daggers of the reſt of mankind. The law of God would be a plain and conſiſtent law, and no color would remain

main for infidels to form this argument: "Ei-
"ther the ſcriptures do not contain the law of
"God, or it was not in the intention of God to
"promote the peace and happineſs of mankind,
"or he did not porportion the means to his
"end:" every one of which propoſitions is blaſ-
phemy; and yet, as theology has corrupted genu-
ine chriſtianity, it will be hard to evade them all.

BUT ſince ſuch a change as this may be wiſhed for by good men, rather than expected by any man, it is proper to conſider what can be done to leſſen an irremediable evil, and whether good policy cannot furniſh an antidote againſt the poiſon of theology; on which I ſhall ſay a word or two before I finiſh this long eſſay. There are arguments, no doubt, even of the political kind, and of irreſiſtible force, againſt atheiſts who reject all religion, latitudinarians who admit all alike, and rigidiſts who ſuffer one alone. If the firſt prevail, there will be no religious conſcience at all; if the ſecond, there will be as many as there are religious ſects in every ſociety; if the third, perſecution for religion will be made a maxim of government, as it is made in ſome countries, to the bane of ſociety, and to the ſhame of the chriſtian profeſſion. Do there remain then no means to prevent the fatal effects of theological diſputes, and eccleſiaſtical quarrels? Some countries are ſo miſerable by principles of bigotry incorporated with thoſe of their government, and by the eſtabliſhment of inquiſitions, that there remain no ſuch means, but

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by the total extirpation of all thoſe who differ, or who are ſuſpected to differ, from the eſtabliſhed doctrines. In other countries, tho a rigid ſpirit prevails, yet if inquiſitions are not eſtabliſhed, and if eccleſiaſtics do not govern, it is very poſſible by ſkill and management to allay, for the moſt part, the ferments which theology is apt to raiſe in the ſtate, and to blunt the fury of thoſe who call themſelves orthodox, and every man who diffents in opinion from them heretical. In countries where this rigid ſpirit is not that of the government, tho diſſention cannot be entirely prevented, the bad influence and effects of it may. To make government effectual to all the good purpoſes of it, there muſt be a religion; this religion muſt be national; and this national religion muſt be maintained in reputation and reverence; all other religions or ſects muſt be kept too low to become the rivals of it. Theſe are in my apprehenſion firſt principles of good policy. The eſtabliſhment of a religious order ſubject to the civil magiſtrate, and ſubſervient to the civil power, not that of a religious ſociety pretending to be the allies, and aiming to be the maſters, of the civil, may be reconciled very well to theſe principles: and ſure I am that they may be purſued, not only without perſecution, but without the invaſion of any one right which men can juſtly claim under the freeſt and moſt equitable government. The parliament of one thouſand ſix hundred and forty one declared, that human laws cannot bind conſcience; which is a declaration every ſect makes

makes out of power, and none observe willingly in it. But be it so. Human laws, however, may and ought to exclude those men from power in the state, kings especially, who profess a private conscience repugnant to the public conscience of that state. Such men will make use of power, and the better men they are the more, to propagate their own schemes of religion, to strengthen their own party, and to recommend their particular notions about ecclesiastical government: which cannot be done without manifest danger to the public peace. The wisdom of our constitution has therefore joined admirably well together the two most compatible things in the world, how incompatible soever they may have been represented, a test and a toleration; and, by rejecting alike the principles of latitudinarians and rigidists, has gone far to prevent those evils that gave occasion to the objection of atheists: as I hope that I have done in this essay to prove, by considering the nature, rise, progress, and effects of authority in matters of religion, that theology has been always liable to this objection, christianity never. Christianity, genuine christianity, is contained in the Gospels, it is the word of God: it requires, therefore, our veneration, and a strict conformity to it. Traditional christianity, or that artificial theology which passes for genuine, and which we all profess, is derived from the writings of fathers and doctors of the church, and from the decrees of councils. It is therefore the word of men, and of men for the most part either very weak, very mad,

mad, or very knaviſh. It requires, therefore, no regard, nor any inward conformity to it. You have, I know, at your elbow a very foul-mouthed and a very trifling critic, who will endeavour to impoſe upon you on this occaſion, as he did on a former. He will tell you, again, that I contradict myſelf; and that, by going about to deſtroy the authority of the fathers and the church, which I reject, I go about to deſtroy the authenticity of the Goſpels, which I admit. But if the dogmatical pedant ſhould make this objection, be pleaſed to give him this anſwer: that I do indeed admit the Goſpels, not on the teſtimony of the Spirit, like CALVIN; but on that of the fathers and doctors of the church, who not only bear this teſtimony ſeparately; but, aſſembled in a council at Laodicea, rejecting many other Goſpels, made a canon of theſe: and yet that his objection is impertinent, ſince I may receive the Goſpels on the credit of theſe men, of whom I think very little better than I do of him, for authentic ſcriptures, juſt as well as he receives the books of the Old Teſtament, concerning which he has ſtarted ſo many idle paradoxes, for ſuch, on the credit of the Jews, tho he rejects their oral law and the fabulous traditions of their rabbins. Thus I ſhall conclude this long eſſay, wherein I have recalled the ſum of what I have ſaid to you in converſation, and which has, I fear, too much of the looſe and wandering air of converſation.

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FRAGMENTS:

OR

MINUTES

OF

ESSAYS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE foregoing Eſſays, if they may deſerve even that name, and the Fragments or minutes that follow, were thrown upon paper in Mr. Pope's lifetime, and at his deſire. They were all communicated to him in ſcraps, as they were occaſionally writ. But the latter not having been connected and put together under different heads, and in the ſame order as the former had been, before his death, if that may be called order; I have contented myſelf to correct and extend them a little, and to leave them as Fragments, or minutes, in the form in which they appear, tho they might be ſtyled Eſſays, with no more impropriety than thoſe which precede them. They are all nothing more than repetitions of converſations often interrupted, often renewed, and often carried on a little confuſedly. The opinions I held are expoſed as clearly, as they ought to be by a man who thinks his opinions founded in truth. I thought, and I think ſtill, that mine were ſo. The more important, therefore, the ſubjects are, the more neceſſary it ſeemed to me not to diſguiſe the truth, eſpecially to friends not eaſy to be ſcandaliſed, even when their own opinions and prejudices were frequently contradicted, and on occaſions when freedom of ſpeech could be neither indecent nor hurtful. It could be neither indecent nor hurtful to theſe friends; nor will it be ſo, I hope, to thoſe into whoſe hands theſe papers may fall after my death.

FRAGMENTS:

OR

MINUTES

OF

ESSAYS.

I.

I Have read again Dr. CUDWORTH's poſthumous treatiſe concerning eternal and immutable morality, which you ſent me long ago: and ſince you aſk my opinion of it now, I ſhall take ſome notice of thoſe, which this very learned author defends on two ſubjects, the nature of human knowledge, and the principles of natural religion. On the firſt I have writ to you already, and on the laſt you know that I intend to write to you. On both of theſe I differ widely from the doctor, and am very far from finding any thing in this treatiſe, which can induce me, in the leaſt degree, to change my way of thinking. On the contrary, the great principle on which he proceeds ſeems to me of the utmoſt abſurdity, and the conſequences deducible from it at leaſt as dangerous, perhaps more ſo, to the foundation of all religion, than

the conſequences that flow from the doctrines he oppoſes.

CUDWORTH enters into the diſpute between DES CARTES and his oppoſers, who have triumphed exceedingly over him for ſaying, "I do not think "that the eſſences of things, and thoſe mathema- "tical truths which can be known of them, are "independent on God; but I think, however, "that they are immutable and eternal, becauſe "God willed and ordered that they ſhould be ſo." It is more probable, and it is more candid to believe that this philoſopher was in earneſt, than that he was in jeſt, when he advanced this propoſition. He might think that he took the beſt, if not the ſtrongeſt, ſide in diſpute, and approve his own intention in the choice he made; as it deſerves to be approved by every ſincere theiſt, and modeſt enquirer into matters of the firſt philoſophy, even by thoſe who are not of his mind.

IF DES CARTES was to ariſe, and to anſwer for himſelf, might he not diſtinguiſh between immutable and independent? Might he not ſay that theſe truths are immutable, becauſe they affirm what is conformable to that univerſal nature whereof God is the author, as he is of that intelligence by which they are perceived; and that they are therefore, in a proper ſenſe, both immutable and dependent? immutable, as much as the nature is to which they belong; dependent, on that Being by whoſe energy this nature began

to

to exiſt, and is preſerved. He might own himſelf afraid to aſſert, notwithſtanding the deciſions of ſchoolmen, or the decrees of councils, that there can be any entity whatever, or any thing in any being whatever, which is independent on God. He might lament his own fate, to be accuſed of atheiſm becauſe he employed, in phyſical hypotheſes, matter and motion alone; tho he always ſuppoſed a firſt mover, and had proved, by a demonſtration he thought good, the exiſtence of an all-perfect Being: and to be thus accuſed by men, who preſume to maintain that they have other objects of knowledge, beſides the exiſtence of an all-perfect Being, which exiſt by the neceſſity of their own natures, and independently on him. He would reject moſt certainly, with ſome of that ſourneſs which he had in his temper, as well as in his countenance, the imputation of betaking himſelf to a pitiful evaſion. He would ſhew, with great force, that his apprehenſion of admitting any thing independent on God into the corporeal or intellectual ſyſtem, is a moſt reaſonable apprehenſion, and no bugbear, as the doctor calls it. He might ſhew, perhaps, the profane conſequences of ſuch metaphyſics as the doctor's, by citing, among others, this aſſertion from the treatiſe we ſpeak of here: "the eternal "and immutable wiſdom in the mind of God is "thence participated by created beings indepen-"dent upon the will of God." He might inſiſt that, ſince "the wiſdom of God is as much God "as the will of God," and the will, by conſe-

quence, as the wiſdom, it is abſurd to diſtinguiſh them; and that it is ſomething worſe than abſurd to reaſon about the divine, as we reaſon about the human intellect; to divide and parcel out the former on the plan of the latter. If the will of man is blind, dark, plumbean, flexible, and liable to be ſeduced, is the will of God to be conceived in the like manner? And, if it is not, why are we led to conclude that a ſuperior faculty is neceſſary to determine it, as the judgment of reaſon does, or ſhould, determine that of man? The antients thought matter eternal; and aſſumed that the demiurgus, or divine architect, compoſed the frame of the world with materials which were ready prepared, and independently on him in a confuſed chaos. Much in the ſame manner, ſuch metaphyſicians as the learned CUDWORTH have imagined a ſort of intellectual chaos, a chaos of eternal ideas, of incorporeal eſſences, independent on God, ſelf-exiſtent, and therefore co-eval with the Supreme Being, and therefore anterior to all other natures. In this intellectual chaos, God ſees, and man muſt endeavour to ſee, the natures, the real eſſences, of things: and thus the foundations of morality are laid higher than the exiſtence of any moral agents, before there was any ſyſtem of being, from which the obligations to it could reſult, or to which they could be applied: juſt as the ſame philoſophers ſuppoſe the incorporeal eſſences of white and black, for inſtance, to have exiſted when there was no ſuch thing, as color;

and

and those of a square and circle, when there was neither form nor figure.

DES CARTES would have broke off the dispute by acknowledging, what he had acknowledged before, that "all these things are unintelligible to "us;" and that by consequence all dispute about them is impertinent. I should have gone away confirmed in my opinion that there is nothing in any kind of being, which does not depend on the supreme, immense, all-perfect Being, nor any nature which does not depend on the Author of all nature; tho I felt, at the same time, the difficulty of maintaining this opinion by argument. Mr. LOCKE observes how impossible it is for us to conceive certain relations, habitudes, and connections, visibly included in some of our ideas, to be separable from them even by infinite power. Let us observe, on this occasion, how impossible, or at least how extremely difficult, it is for us to separate the idea of eternity from certain mathematical and moral truths, as well as from such as are called necessary, and are self-evident, on one hand: and, on the other, how impossible it is to conceive that truths should exist before the things to which they are relative, or particular natures and essences, before the system of universal nature, and when there was no being but the super-essential Being.

GOD knew, from all eternity, every system, corporeal and intellectual, that he created in time.

He knew by conſequence, for he ordered, the various manners in which all the parts of theſe ſyſtems, and the ſyſtems themſelves, ſhould operate on one other, the relations they ſhould have, the proportions they ſhould bear, the ideas they ſhould communicate to creatures fitted to receive them, and capable of knowing only by them. All this he foreknew; but all this did not therefore exiſt: ſuch an exiſtence was at moſt eventual, and depended on the will, not the knowledge, of God; if we may diſtinguiſh them, to be a little more intelligible. Theſe immaterial forms and eſſences, if any ſuch there were, and theſe immutable truths, for ſuch there are moſt certainly, could not begin to exiſt in any proper ſenſe till thoſe ſyſtems of nature, to which the former are ſaid to belong, and from which the latter do manifeſtly reſult, were called into actuality: and, in ſhort, I cannot perſuade myſelf that DES CARTES aſſerted without good reaſon, tho he has been much cenſured for aſſerting it, that God is the author of the eſſence, as well as of the exiſtence, of all that he created *.

IF

* WHAT I have been led to ſay on this occaſion makes it neceſſary to explain myſelf a little more fully; for tho I dare not aſſert, like metaphyſical divines of your and my communion, that the eſſences of things are in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe independent on God, any more than their exiſtence; nor am able to conceive a dependency of exiſtences or beings, and an independency of eſſences or manners of being; yet I am far from aſſenting to DES CARTES in all he has advanced on this ſubject and on matters relative to it. He has puſhed hypotheſis, and even truth itſelf, into chimera. There is a ſort of knight-errantry in philoſophy, as well as in arms. The end propoſed by both is laudable; for nothing can be ſo more than to redreſs wrongs

IF what has been ſaid ſhould be called hypothetical, it muſt be allowed to be leſs ſo, and, at the ſame

wrongs and to correct errors. But when imagination is let looſe, and the brain is overheated, wrongs may be redreſſed by new wrongs, errors may be corrected by new errors. The cauſe of innocence may be ill defended by heroes of one ſort, and that of truth by heroes of another. Such was DON QUIXOTTE, ſuch was DES CARTES; and the imaginary character of one, and the real character of the other, gave occaſion to the two moſt ingenious ſatirical romances that were ever writ.

IN one of theſe, a chineſe mandarin meets ſome diſciples of this philoſopher as they travelled through the moon to thoſe imaginary ſpaces, to that third heaven, where his thinking ſubſtance was employed in building a new world, or the model of a world, on his own principles of matter and motion, whilſt his extended ſubſtance lay buried at Stockholm, or at Paris. The mandarin had contracted acquaintance with father MERSENNE in a former journey, had read the metaphyſical meditations, was inſtructed in this part at leaſt of the carteſian philoſophy, and the judgment he made of it I own to be mine. It contains opinions that ſeem to my apprehenſion moſt evidently falſe, and paralogiſms ſo much oftener than demonſtrations, that, when I am of the ſame mind, I am ſo, frequently, for reaſons different from his, and even contrary to them. Thus, for inſtance, I take it to be evidently falſe that we have certainty of knowledge whenever we have clear and diſtinct ideas of any thing. Our ideas are often clear and diſtinct, and at the ſame time fantaſtical. Examples may be brought of ſuch as we receive immediately and paſſively from outward objects, and of ſuch as the mind frames by it's own activity: for that which GASSENDI acknowledges of himſelf, in his objections to the third meditation of DES CARTES, muſt have been alike true of others. Many things had ſeemed to him ſo clear and diſtinct that he held them for undoubted geometrical truths, which he was obliged afterwards, and on a further examination, to reject. To what purpoſe now is it ſaid that an attribute, which we perceive to be contained in the idea of any thing, may be affirmed of that thing with

ſame time, to convey to the mind ideas and notions much more intelligible, than all that metaphyſical

truth? Such an attribute may be affirmed with metaphyſical truth of the moſt fantaſtical idea. But the difference between metaphyſical and real truth is great; and tho we have the former on our ſide in affirming the attribute, yet the whole muſt be chimerical if the idea be ſo; and ſuch a proceſs of reaſoning may confirm us in fantaſtical, it cannot lead us to real knowledge.

THIS happened to the author of theſe maxims, the firſt of which is falſe, and the ſecond precarious and uncertain, when he attempted to demonſtrate the exiſtence of God. I do not believe that he meaned to weaken this great truth by employing a ſophiſm to prove it; but I believe that the affectation of novelty led him into a paralogiſm, or an undeſigned ſophiſm. He aſſumed that he had in his mind a clear and diſtinct idea of an infinite all-perfect Being; that this idea has an objective reality, or, in plainer terms, a real object, which may be known by the idea alone, and without any further proofs; and that neceſſary exiſtence is contained, as indeed it is, in this idea. From all this he concluded that an infinite all-perfect Being exiſts, and is the cauſe of this idea which repreſents himſelf.

Now that ſuch a being exiſts, and that he can want no perfection conceivable or inconceivable by us, may be, and has been, demonſtrated invincibly. But to ſay that he can become the object of a clear and diſtinct idea, is to advance a groundleſs paradox. We may know very certainly that there is a figure which has a thouſand ſides: but no man will ſay, I think, that his mind repreſents theſe thouſand ſides to him in one clear and diſtinct idea, nor that he has any other than a general and confuſed notion of this figure. Much leſs will any man, who is not a ſworn Carteſian, pretend that he perceives in his mind a clear and diſtinct idea of the infinite all-perfect Being. He knows in general that there is ſuch a being, and that to ſuppoſe there is not, implies contradiction, or rather many contradictions. He has particular ideas and notions of ſome of the divine perfections, well determined as far as they extend, and yet inadequate. There are others which he cannot ſo determine;

physical jargon which Dr. CUDWORTH employs, after his grecian masters. Is it any thing better than

mine; and he knows that there are many of which he can have no conception at all: for I do not agree with the chinese philosopher, nor with the Jesuit who makes him speak, that there are any which seem incompatible to him, unless it be when he determines ill the ideas he has, or when he pretends to have ideas he cannot have; and that we are apt to do so often, the very examples, which are brought to shew an incompatibility in the divine perfections, are sufficient to shew.

To believe that there is a God, we must be taught this great principle of all religion, and receive it on authority. To know that there is one, we must go through a process of reasoning that connects certain evident truths intuitively together, and so arrives at demonstration. Tho' the atheist does not connect them into a demonstration of God's existence, yet he knows them all to be truths, as well as the theist. He knows that they result from the nature of things. He pronounces them therefore immutable and eternal, as he conceives that nature to be; and can take no side in the question, whether they are dependent or independent on God, since he acknowledges no God. The theist makes a better use of these truths; for he connects them into a demonstration of God's existence, and, instead of acknowledging the truth of no proposition, like Dr. CARTES, till he discovers the truth of this, he finds by experience that he could not have discovered the truth of this, if he had not antecedently known and acknowledged the truth of many others. He owns several necessary truths not written nor imprinted on his mind, but such as he has framed by observing the agreement and disagreement of his ideas, and such as he concludes every other man, who has the same faculties, and the same perceptions in his mind, must necessarily frame. He calls these truths eternal and immutable relatively to that system of nature from which they result. But he cannot call them independent as properly and as consistently as the atheist may, since he acknowledges a first cause, an author of this and every other system of nature.

ARISTOTLE, who acts a part as well as the chinese mandarin

than jargon, to tell us: that our ideas of white, or black, which we receive from outward objects; our

darin in the ſcenes of the romance I quote, when he comes to examine thoſe aſſertions of DES CARTES, "That the eſſences "of things, and the truths called neceſſary, are dependent on "God, and that they are immutable and eternal in no other "ſenſe than this, that God willed they ſhould be ſo," ſuppoſes that the French philoſopher could mean to ſpeak of no eſſences except thoſe of created beings, nor of any propoſitions except ſuch as are advanced concerning them. That this was his meaning no doubt can be made: and he explained it ſufficiently when he ſaid "God is the author of the eſſence, as well as "of the exiſtence, of his creatures." But even with this meaning the Stagyrite, or rather the Jeſuit, is not contented. DES CARTES ſhould have reflected, he ſays, that truths, which regard the eſſence of created beings, have a neceſſary connection with thoſe which regard the eſſence of God. He brings an example. "That the creature is eſſentially dependent on "God," is, he ſays, a propoſition which belongs to the eſſence of the creature, "That God is the abſolute maſter and the "free cauſe of all beings," is a propoſition which belongs to the eſſence of the Creator; and yet that, if one of theſe could be falſe, the other might be ſo too. Now ſurely the want of reflection was, in this caſe, on the ſide of ARISTOTLE himſelf. "If one of theſe propoſitions could be falſe, the other might "be ſo too." Agreed, but not for the reaſon he gives, a ſuppoſed neceſſary and general connection between truths that regard the eſſences of created beings, and truths that regard the eſſence of the divine uncreated Being. The reaſon is, that theſe propoſitions are in truth identical, that the firſt belongs to the eſſence of God as really as the laſt, and that to ſay the creature is dependent on the Creator, or the Creator is abſolute maſter of the creature, is to affirm the ſame thing. Their eſſences are infinitely diſtant, but they are connected by this relation; and all other connection of them is purely imaginary.

WE know the relation of the Creator to his creatures, and of the creatures to their Creator. But to talk of a neceſſary connection between truths that belong to the eſſence of one and the eſſences of the other, ſeems to be little elſe than metaphyſical

our ideas of a ſquare, or a circle, which we acquire by the help of our ſenſes likewiſe; or our ideas

metaphyſical nonſenſe, and the language of men who ſeek to evade what they cannot explain. When God made the animal world, he made ſubſtances whoſe eſſences are unknown to us. Even our own is ſo. What now is the neceſſary connection between the incomprehenſible eſſence of the ſupreme, ſelf-exiſtent, all-perfect Being, and thoſe of created ſubſtances which he has not given us the means of knowing, or between truths that belong to either? When God created finite extenſion he created all the poſſible modes of it, and, among the reſt, that of a ſpace included within three lines, which we have obſerved, and have called a triangle. By contemplating this figure, we diſcover the various properties of it, and are able to demonſtrate ſeveral truths concerning them, as the equality, for inſtance, of theſe three angles to two right angles. What now is the neceſſary connection between finite extenſion in the ſeveral eſſential modes of it, and an infinite but ſimple unextended ſpiritual ſubſtance, ſuch as we conceive that of God to be in his ineffable manner of being? What is the neceſſary connection between true and falſe propoſitions relative to one, or the other?

On the whole, we may conclude in favor of Des Cartes, that he imagined no ſuch abſurd connection; and thought himſelf therefore at liberty to aſſume what he did aſſume concerning the dependency of created eſſences, as well as exiſtences, on God, who is, according to him, the efficient cauſe of the truth of all true propoſitions about them. Truths relating to God always have been, and always muſt be, the ſame. They are abſolutely from all eternity, and to all eternity, independent on his will, for he is what he is, by the neceſſity of his nature; and ſelf-exiſtence is part of his eſſence. But nothing of this kind is applicable to the creatures. They might have been, or not have been; and the ſuppoſition of their non-exiſtence implies no contradiction. It is true, indeed, that whilſt they exiſt, they are what God made them to be; and omnipotence, that can deſtroy them, cannot alter their eſſences. Theſe eſſences, however, and the truths concerning

ideas of juſt and unjuſt, which we frame on experience, are incorporeal ſubſtances, eternal eſſences,

cerning them, are not ſo abſolutely independent on God, as the adverſaries of DES CARTES pronounce them to be; for even in the hypotheſis, that God had no other ſhare, not exerted any other power, in the great work of the creation, than that of calling eſſences he could not create into exiſtence, by creating the things to which they belong; theſe eſſences are ſtill indirectly, if not directly, dependent on him, and he is doubly the cauſe of thoſe truths which we affirm concerning them, as he called the eſſences into exiſtence, and as he created beings capable of perceiving them.

THIS diſtinction between exiſtences and eſſences, the former of which, that are dependent on the will of God, drew the latter, that are independent on his will, along with them into the ſyſtem of things that are, is not very clear. Might not the obſcurity be taken away by taking away this diſtinction, and by underſtanding eſſences to be nothing more, than manners of being determined by the power that gives the being, and manners of conceiving determined by the power that forms the conceptions? When God made limited extenſion, he made it capable of receiving various modifications, and of producing various appearances. Theſe we diſtinguiſh by names for our own uſe. We call them circles, for inſtance, or ſquares, or triangles (I ſpeak not here of ſubſtances, for with their real eſſences it is not pretended that we have any thing to do) and when we have given them theſe names, philoſophers aſſume that they are real eſſences, independent on God, tho he is the author of all extenſion, and gave us faculties to perceive theſe forms of it.

IT would be tedious, and needleſs, to ſpeak of the doctrine of the ſchools concerning eſſences. I ſhall content myſelf to make one obſervation more on this head. The combinations of ideas which are diſtinguiſhed by the term of mixed modes, and are principally of the moral kind, have no bad title to be eſteemed eſſences. We compound them, we can therefore decompound them; and the real conſtitution of every ſpecies of them cannot be unknown to us. They are not, however,

ſences, independent natures, things ingenerable and unperiſhable, according to PLATO and

however, eſſences like thoſe which ſeveral philoſophers have imagined, from PLATO down to CUDWORTH, and others infected by the ſame metaphyſics. They are not ingenerable, nor immutable, nor unperiſhable in a proper ſenſe; for, if they were ſo, theſe effects would be more perfect than their cauſe, ſince the human mind is their cauſe, and in ſome ſort their creator, and ſince the human mind is none of theſe. They are not independent neither on the will of God. They are abſtract complex notions. Such Mr. LOCKE gives us leave to call them, "as by a peculiar right appertaining to the under-"ſtanding[*]." The mind makes them arbitrarily and occaſionally, by virtue of a power to conceive things in this manner, which God has beſtowed, and directed to the improvement of general knowledge. There they fluctuate: they are not the ſame eſſences in every mind, nor always in the ſame mind; and if they anſwer their purpoſe in any degree, that degree is proportionable to the mental power of conceiving things in this manner which God has given us. Thus even the truths we call neceſſary, the eternae veritates of which we boaſt, are one way or other dependent on the Supreme Being. Their neceſſity is not antecedent, but conſequential, to the exiſtence of material and intellectual created natures. Their neceſſity ariſes from a conformity to theſe natures, which we are made able to diſcern intuitively in certain caſes.

BUT it is time to conclude a note too long perhaps already, tho I have hurried through it, and touched the matter of it more lightly than I could have done. I do not pretend to decide the queſtion between DES CARTES and his adverſaries. All I would inculcate is this, that ſince his opinion may receive a reaſonable interpretation, it ſhould not be condemned as abſolutely, and as dogmatically, as it has been; and that it becomes a theiſt to incline always to the ſide which aſcribes the greateſt poſſible power to God, from that which has even the appearance of limiting it by aſſuming an independency, when a dependency on him implies no contradiction.

[*] Lib. iii. c. 5.

ARISTOTLE,

ARISTOTLE, and which the former, as TULLY expreſſes his ſenſe, "negat gigni, ſed ſemper eſſe, "et ratione et intelligentia contineri?" Is it any thing better than jargon, to tell us that "theſe "ſubſtances, eſſences, natures, are the primary "objects of ſcience, and the ſame too with the "intellect that knows them; that they are uni-"form modifications of the human and of the "divine mind, and that altho the former be cre-"ated, yet the knowledge it has is a participation "of that one eternal, immutable, and uncreated "wiſdom?" In ſhort, is it any thing better than jargon, to talk of "ectypal prints, and deriva-"tive ſignatures from one architypal intellect or "ſeal, like ſo many multiplied reflexions of one "and the ſame face made in ſeveral glaſſes?"

ACCORDING to ſuch philoſophy as this, we may, and we muſt, pierce into the myſtery of God's nature, and into the depths of his wiſdom, to arrive at a knowledge of his will relatively to man. We muſt found the principles of morality, not on our knowledge of what our Creator has done, but on our knowledge of what he knows. We muſt not conſult his will as it is ſignified by the conſtitution of the ſyſtem wherein he has placed us, but we muſt abſtract ourſelves from this, and deduce our moral obligations from an eternal reaſon, from the immutable and independent natures of things. We muſt contemplate the ſame architypes according to which our ſyſtem of be-iug was made, to know how we are to conduct

our-

ourſelves in it; and thus the ſame rule becomes common to God and men. Our knowledge is no longer human, it is divine. It is no longer derived from outward impreſſions, and inward operations; our ideas have no longer their diſtinct architypes exiſting out of the mind, or formed in it; they are all the impreſſions of an architypal ſeal, that is, of the divine intellect. A ſtrange method, ſurely, of proving our ideas, if not the knowledge we acquire by them, to be independent on God.

I CANNOT ſoar ſo high as PLATO and CUDWORTH. I will not ſink ſo low as PROTAGORAS, and other antients; as HOBBES, and other moderns. The former amaze, inſtead of inſtructing, me; and, if I underſtand the latter, I only underſtand them to know that they impoſe on themſelves, and would impoſe on me, the groſſeſt abſurdities. Strange extremes! When CUDWORTH holds up the metaphyſical glaſs to my eye, I ſee ſomething, I know not what; ſomething that glitters at an immeaſurable diſtance from me. When HOBBES holds it up, he changes the poſition: and I ſee ſomething monſtrous at the very end of the glaſs.

As whimſical, and as little intelligible, as the doctrines of the former are, they may lead men to think that, the will of God, ſignified by his works, not being the ſole true criterion of moral good and evil; and ſince there is another criterion antecedent to this, nay, even the criterion of it, that is, the

the eternal reaſon of immutable independent natures; they ought to have an entire regard to theſe, and none to the will of God ſignified by his works: becauſe in them he has done little elſe than clothe theſe eternal uncreated eſſences with a garment of exiſtence, "ſartoris inſtar rerum eſſentias veſtire "exiſtentia." CUDWORTH declares againſt this abſurd conceit, which ARISTOTLE too chaſtiſes. But then what did the good man, and all thoſe who have held the ſame opinions, mean? To anſwer truly, they thought, as men deep in imaginary ſcience are apt to do, that they had much meaning when they had really none.

AFTER ſounding loudly in our ears, and repeating dogmatically, that things are what they are by their natures, eternal, immutable, and independent on the will of God; they are driven to diſtinguiſh, that they may avoid all miſtake, as they pretend, and to aſſert, not what their words import, but ſomething which their words do not import, nor can be ſaid to import any where out of the ſchools. When they talk of natures by which things are what they are, they do not mean, it ſeems, as any vulgar man would have thought, the conſtituent eſſences of things, the real natures by which alone things can be what they are. They mean ſomething which is not a nature nor eſſence, but ſomething which ſchoolmen and philoſophers have been pleaſed to call ſo. When they ſay that things are white by whiteneſs, triangular by triangularity, or juſt by juſtice, and that omnipotence itſelf cannot

not make them white, triangular, nor juſt, without ſuch certain natures; a man who is not metaphyſician, nor logician, muſt be induced to think their meaning to be, that God makes things, dependent on him, to exiſt conformably to natures independent on him. If they were not thought to have ſome ſuch meaning, they could be underſtood to mean nothing more than this, that things are white, triangular, and juſt, becauſe God has made them white, triangular, and juſt; and that omnipotence itſelf cannot make black, ſquare, nor unjuſt, what omnipotence makes white, triangular, and juſt. Theſe are moſt immutable truths, no doubt, and deſerve to have their place at the fountain-head of ſcience. But theſe philoſophers do not mean by their eternal, independent natures, any natures at all. They mean ſuch intelligible eſſences, and rations of things, as are objects of the mind. Now, the objects of our minds being nothing but our ideas, it follows that theſe natures, ſo much talked of, are not natures, but ſimple or complex ideas of natures: and all the incorporeal ſubſtances vaniſh into air, that is, they are confeſſedly phantaſtic, not real. They are merely certain abſtract ideas which philoſophers have taken it into their heads to affirm that they frame; and in which affirmation I may have leave to be of opinion that they deſerve no more credit, than a man who is in any other delirium. They who are as ſubtile as ARISTOTLE or CUDWORTH, who can diſcover, with the firſt, that ſenſe is the ſame with ſenſible things; and, with both, that underſtanding

derſtanding is the ſame with the things underſtood, may find out, likewiſe, that the nature of a thing, and the idea of that nature, are one and the ſame. But I ſuppoſe that they, who preſerve their common ſenſe free from the taint of metaphyſics, will not eaſily conceive that their ideas, however general or abſtracted, can be called, with the leaſt propriety, immaterial eſſences, incorporeal ſubſtances, eternal, immutable, and ſo on.

IT is an obſervation of Mr. LOCKE, that "we "have very few abſtract names for our ideas of "ſubſtances; and that the few which the ſchools "have forged, could never get into common uſe, "nor obtain public approbation: whereas all our "ſimple ideas have abſtract, as well as concrete, "names; and ſo have our ideas of modes and re-"lations." From hence that great author infers a confeſſion of all mankind, that they have no ideas of the real eſſences of ſubſtances, and a declaration, that their ſimple ideas, and thoſe of modes and relations, are real eſſences, or the ideas of real eſſences. Now, the truth of the ſuppoſed confeſſion I admit entirely; but the truth of the ſuppoſed declaration is not ſo evident, and requires ſome explanation as it is expreſſed. It is, if I miſtake not, in part falſe, and in part true; and ſerves neither Mr. LOCKE's purpoſe, nor Dr. CUDWORTH's, even where it is true. To argue from the uſe of words to the reality of things, is no very ſure method. Languages are framed by the vulgar, not by philoſophers: and when names are improperly

improperly given, and words come to be improperly applied, cuſtom eſtabliſhes them ſoon, and they eaſily miſlead even the minds of philoſophers. The ſubject before us affords an example of this ſort, and if we examine it a little attentively, we ſhall find a corner of Mr. LOCKE's ſyſtem about ideas, rent and torn, but the whole fabric of Dr. CUDWORTH's demoliſhed to the foundations.

WORDS have been invented and applied, and names have been aſſigned, as men wanted them, or fancied, by miſtake, that they wanted them, to communicate their ideas with more preciſion, or even to conceive them more diſtinctly. Whatever advantage has been procured to the improvement of knowledge by the firſt manner of proceeding, much confuſion and error have ariſen from the ſecond: innumerable inſtances of which there are. One of the greateſt, and of the moſt pernicious in its conſequences, we find in the uſe and application of the word abſtraction. There is a very practicable operation of the mind, by which we are ſaid to abſtract ideas, and by which we do, in effect, generalize them in a certain manner, and to a certain degree, by ſubſtituting one as repreſentative of many. There is another ſuppoſed, but impracticable, operation of the mind, by which ſome philoſophers have made themſelves and others believe, that they abſtract, from a multitude of particular ideas, the idea of one general nature or eſſence, which is all of them and none of them: whereas, in truth, tho they can define general na-

tures or eſſences in very clear propoſitions, they cannot frame an idea of any general nature, which is not a particular idea of that nature.

SINCE men do not commonly employ abſtract names for their ideas of ſubſtances, it is a ſhrewd ſign, indeed, that they are not conſcious of any ideas of ſubſtances made by the ſecond kind of abſtraction, as Mr. LOCKE obſerves, but content themſelves, in this caſe, with general ideas made by the firſt. To talk of nominal eſſences, and the abſtraction of ſuch, comes too near the gibberiſh of the ſchools about genera and ſpecies: and if it does not coincide with the doctrine of certain eſſential forms, or moulds, wherein different things are caſt, as it were, to conſtitute different natures, it perplexes the underſtanding, and darkens the plaineſt objects of it but little leſs. If we lay aſide theſe refinements, and think for ourſelves, we ſhall ſoon diſcover, unleſs I am extremely miſtaken, that the former method of abſtracting or generalizing our ideas, is the univerſal practice of mankind; and that the latter is purely imaginary, not only in the caſe of ſubſtances, and of ſimple ideas, whereof the real eſſences are, in my opinion, equally unknown to us, but in the caſe of modes and relations, whoſe real eſſences muſt of neceſſity be known to us, ſince our underſtanding frames them.

NOTHING can be more true than what Mr. LOCKE himſelf confeſſes, that "general and uni-

"verſal

"verſal belong not to the real exiſtence of things, "but are the inventions and creatures of the un- "derſtanding, made by it for its own uſe, and "concern only ſigns, whether words or ideas *." On this principle I proceed; but it will not carry me to all the conſequences my maſter, for ſuch I am proud to own him, deduced from it. Let us conſider ſubſtances in the firſt place. We have innumerable ideas of particular ſubſtances, and I need not ſtand to ſhew how little improvement we ſhould make in knowledge, and how impoſſible it would be to reaſon, or to communicate any reaſonings about them, by the help of ſuch ideas alone. How then does the mind proceed? As theſe complex ideas are innumerable, ſo are they beyond meaſure various. Out of this variety the mind ſelects ſuch as have a more remote, and ſuch as have a more immediate, reſemblance; and claſſes them accordingly. From this operation of the mind has ariſen the ſchool diſtinction of genus and ſpecies. Now, to ſpeak according to it, which we may do intelligibly on this occaſion: as the mind is unable, by abſtraction, or any imaginable way, to comprehend any one ſpecies, and much more any one genus, under one general idea, it comprehends each under one general name, and we ſay, for inſtance, man, or animal. The mind does ſtill more in the former caſe; for, all the ideas that compoſe a ſort or ſpecies having a cloſe reſemblance to one another, the mind ſubſtitutes one, as I ſaid above, to repreſent them all. This

* Eſſay, lib. iii. c. 3.

ideal man is neither PETER nor PAUL; it is not the idea of any particular man; it is a particular idea of man made general by the application. The archetypes of this phantaſm are without, and it is abſtracted, if you pleaſe to uſe the word, from them. But it is ſo far from being an abſtract univerſal idea of man, abſtracted from thoſe particular forms, or complex phantaſms, which the mind repreſents to itſelf (as CUDWORTH affirms againſt intuitive knowledge) that it is one of theſe very phantaſms. It is not, in ſhort, an idea of humanity. The mind creates it to ſupply the want of an idea we cannot have. A general univerſal idea is inconſiſtent with the real exiſtence of things: but ſuch a particular idea of that which may exiſt becomes itſelf an archetype, according to which we include, in the ſame ideal claſs, or exclude out of it, the objects that ſtrike our ſenſes. Thus it becomes general, by the uſe the mind makes of it, tho it be particular, and be ſignified by a particular word.

THE mind proceeds in the ſame manner with reſpect to all the other ſorts or ſpecies, into which it has claſſed its ideas of ſubſtances. But with reſpect to kinds, or genera, this cannot be. They may be, and they are, comprehended under diſtinct general names; but none of them can be repreſented to the mind by any particular phantaſm or idea, as in the other caſe. How ſhould there be one common archetype for things that have not a cloſe, but a very remote, reſemblance? Such are

the

the various ſorts which every kind contains: and therefore when the mind would advert to the idea, as well as to the name, of animal, it finds itſelf diſappointed. Far from having any abſtract univerſal idea, it has not ſo much as a particular idea that may be generalized, and ſtand in the place of the other.

THERE are two other operations which the mind performs not conſtantly, but occaſionally. The firſt may ſerve to facilitate the communication of knowledge; the ſecond has ſerved to nothing but to facilitate the introduction of error. From the names that ſignify particular ſorts, we deduce ſometimes, and as the mind has need of them, adjectives, or concrete terms, that fix and appropriate to each ſort whatever belongs to it, or is meant to be aſcribed to it. Thus from man we derive human, and we ſpeak of human figure when we would ſignify the figure peculiar to him, and of human paſſions when we would apply thoſe to him which belong to him, tho they are, at the ſame time, common to him, and to other animals. But the ſchoolmen have not ſtopped here. They have invented words to ſignify, very confuſedly and falſely, what was ſignified very diſtinctly and truly before. Thus, for example, they have coined the terms, humanity and animality. If they meant to ſignify, by theſe terms, nothing more than what we know to be comprehended under the names of man and animal, I ſhould have no objection to the uſe of them, nor to thoſe of tableity,

cuppeity, and gobleity, when cuſtom had eſtabliſhed them, as much as DIOGENES ſcoffed at PLATO for introducing them into philoſophy. But PLATO did mean ſomething elſe, and ſo has many a deep metaphyſician and logician ſince his time, and after his example. They have not meant only thoſe appearances, according to which the minds of men have ſorted things, which Mr. LOCKE calls nominal eſſences, and which, he ſays, are the abſtract ideas their names ſtand for; but they have meant real eſſences, intelligible natures, the patterns and archetypes, according to which every thing is what it is. The firſt is, to me, unintelligible; for I neither comprehend how eſſences can be purely nominal, nor how words can be abſtract ideas: and the ſecond is, I ſuppoſe, at this time, an exploded opinion among rational men. In ſhort, he muſt know his own mind very ill, or, knowing it well in other inſtances, muſt be ſtrangely deceived in this by the prejudices of imagination, who can perſuade himſelf that the words humanity and animality have any other ideas annexed to them than the words man and animal. When the firſt raiſes any idea in the mind, it is one of thoſe complex phantaſms that have been mentioned, and that draws after it ſucceſſively, but rapidly, the ideas of all thoſe qualities, corporeal and intellectual, which are ſignified when we join to them the term, human. When the ſecond raiſes any idea at all there, a confuſed huddle of ideas ruſh into the mind at once: an aſſemblage of ſeveral ſpecies of animals that throng together,

like

like thoſe which throng about ADAM, in the famous deſign of Mr. JOHN OVERTON, to receive their names from the firſt of men, who became thus the inſtitutor of nominal eſſences.

BUT now, if it ſhould be confeſſed, that we know nothing of the real eſſences of ſubſtances, and therefore can abſtract no ſuch ideas of them as ſome have pretended; if it ſhould be confeſſed further, that nominal eſſences are nothing more than general names of particular things, not made by abſtraction, but by impoſition; yet ſtill it would be aſſerted, perhaps, that our ſimple ideas are real eſſences; that the mind is able to abſtract their general from their particular natures; and that we give them, for that reaſon, both abſtract and concrete names; the truth of which latter propoſitions I ſhould take the liberty to deny, as well as that of the former. Our ſimple ideas, not one of which it is in our power to make, or to unmake, may be called, properly enough, intellectual atoms, the principles or materials of our whole intellectual ſyſtem. Matter, and the atoms that compoſe it, have been thought eternal, and if we aſſume that they were created in time, we muſt aſſume too that they were created at once. The ſame atoms, ſpecific in number, as well as of ſpecific natures, paſs through all the changes, and take all the various forms, which we obſerve in the material world. There is no new, no continued, creation of them. But we know, conſciouſly, that there is a continued creation of theſe intel-

lectual atoms, that is, of ſimple ideas, in the intellectual world, in different minds, and even in the ſame mind, neither ſpecific in number, nor, perhaps, always exactly ſo in nature: and thus they are not only combined, as the former are always, with one another, that is, with the ſame, but new ideas that ariſe from new perceptions, enter very often into theſe combinations. There is another difference to be obſerved, much more to our purpoſe. We can analyſe more eaſily, and with greater ſucceſs, our complex into ſimple ideas, than we can decompound ſubſtances. In one of theſe operations, we go up to the intellectual atoms. In the other, we ſtop far ſhort of the corporeal. To what now is this difference owing? Is it owing to our ſtrength, or to our weakneſs? Is it a difference, as it may appear at firſt ſight, in favor of the human mind? Much otherwiſe. It ſerves only to ſhew the deficiency and imperfection of our ſimple ideas, of the firſt principles of all our knowledge. If theſe were not ſo confined, and ſo ſuperficial, as they are moſt evidently; if they were extended to more objects, and made their impreſſions on us from a ſpring that lay deeper in the nature of things, we ſhould know much more than we do concerning the compoſition and decompoſition of ſubſtances. If they were real eſſences, or the ideas of real eſſences, we ſhould be acquainted with the real eſſences of ſubſtances, at leaſt to a certain degree: for, what do we mean, when we ſay, that we have no knowledge of the real eſſences of ſubſtances, except theſe two things?

We

We mean certainly, that we have not a number of ideas ſufficient for the acquiſition of ſuch knowledge; and thus the deficiency of ſimple ideas cauſes one half of our ignorance about the complex ideas of ſubſtances. We mean likewiſe, that the ſimple ideas, which we perceive by the impreſſions of outward objects, are often falſe, and always inadequate to the nature of theſe objects; and thus the imperfection of ſimple ideas cauſes another half, at leaſt, of our ignorance about the complex ideas of ſubſtances.

SIMPLE ideas are real eſſences. Of what? Of ſimple ideas? of themſelves? Juſt ſo certain metaphyſical ideas are real ideas. They are really in the mind; but they have no other reality. Such eſſences and ſuch ideas are chimerical alike. All our ſimple ideas ariſe from ſenſation and reflection, from the impreſſions of outward objects, and from the operations of our minds. What the powers are that make theſe impreſſions on the mind in a paſſive ſtate, we know as little as we do, what thoſe are to which the operations of the mind, in an active ſtate, are due. But this we know, the powers that cauſe are more properly eſſences, than the ſimple ideas that are cauſed by them. An eſſence is that by which a thing is what it is. We have an idea of white, we know what it is in our minds: but do we know by virtue of what it is, what it is there? Certainly we do not. It is not ſo much as the idea of any knowable eſſence: how can it be itſelf a known eſſence?

eſſence? or, what ſeek we further than to know that it is a ſenſation?

Such concrete names were neceſſary to be invented, not to ſignify things that exiſt by themſelves like ſubſtances, but to ſignify qualities, ſo we uſually call them, that cannot exiſt independently of ſome ſubſtance in which they appear to exiſt, and are conveyed to the mind in the complex idea of it.

As it is real or apparent want that determines the invention and uſe of names, ſo there have been ſome, and may be more, invented, to ſignify, by one general word, and to appropriate to one ſubſtance, all the particular ideas that men conceive to belong to it, or deſire to apply to it. This has been obſerved already: and here we obſerve further, that theſe terms are limited by the ſubſtance to which they are applied, human by man, golden by gold, and ſo in ſome, not in many, other inſtances of ſorts or kinds, juſt as cuſtom has decided. It is not much otherwiſe in the caſe of the concrete terms, which ſignify each one ſimple idea. The complex idea of man was in the mind, before the word human was invented to ſignify, without the trouble of enumerating them, all the particular ideas comprehended in that complex idea. The ſubſtantive gave occaſion to the adjective. So the complex ideas of all thoſe ſubſtances that communicate to us, among other ſimple ideas, thoſe of white and black, for inſtance,

inſtance, were in the mind before the names of theſe ſimple ideas were invented. This was enough for uſe: and our ideas, when theſe names were invented, as well as the names of the ſeveral ſubſtances to which they belonged, were enough determined and diſtinguiſhed. But the ſchools were not thus contented. They endeavoured to eſtabliſh the doctrine of general natures abſtracted from particular; and ſince they endeavoured it, without ſucceſs, in the complex ideas of ſubſtances, they reſolved to do it in the caſe of our ſimple ideas: and thus whiteneſs and blackneſs, and all the abſtract names of ſimple ideas, were confirmed in general uſe.

THE ſame ſimple ideas being communicated to us from a multitude of different ſubſtances, and being obſerved to be the ſame in the child, and in the man, in the peaſant, and in the philoſopher, they might eaſily paſs for adequate ideas of real natures imparted to all the ſubſtances wherein they were perceived. Thus the vulgar might think very naturally; and, in fact, not only children, but much the greateſt part of men, are firmly perſuaded, that the idea of white, which they perceive in ſnow or milk, is whiteneſs in the ſnow or milk. Nay, this opinion, exploded as it is at preſent, has been that of the great oracles of philoſophy, and many puerilities have been grounded on it, which are ſcarce yet a-while laughed out of the world. They who ſaw formerly, or who ſee now, the impropriety of theſe words, in a phi-

a philoſophical ſenſe, as they denote real eſſences, or abſtract ideas of ſuch, may have thought, however, not only that the uſe of them is of ſome conveniency in language, but that it is a very harmleſs conceſſion to the vulgar. They may have thought it too an indulgence of no great moment to the doctors of abſtraction, who have refined themſelves, on this occaſion, as philoſophers do ſometimes, into vulgar error.

WHITENESS and blackneſs ſeem to ſtand in the ſame degree of a ſuppoſed abſtraction with humanity, and color with animality. This would be admitted by ſome, whilſt others would contend that it is practicable, with application and a ſtrong effort of the mind, to abſtract general natures of ſorts or ſpecies from any particular ideas that we perceive to be the ſame in ſubſtances of different ſorts or ſpecies, as, in the former inſtance, that of whiteneſs or blackneſs, they ſay they do; but that it is impracticable to abſtract ſuch a general nature from many particular ideas that we perceive not to be the ſame, tho co-exiſting in the ſame ſubſtance, as in the inſtance of humanity they ſay they cannot. They would contend further, that tho it be practicable to abſtract the general natures even of kinds, as well as the leſs general natures of ſorts, where ſimple ideas are alone concerned; yet it is impracticable to do the ſame, where the various ſorts that compoſe the kind are ſo many complex ideas, as in the inſtance of animality they ſay they cannot.

But,

But, I think, we may affirm all this to be whimſical and falſe alike, without entering into the diſpute between theſe doctors of abſtraction, and on this ſingle principle, whereof we have an intuitive knowledge. That things cannot exiſt in our minds as it is impoſſible they ſhould exiſt in nature. Now ſingulars do, but univerſals, about which ſo much noiſe has been made in the ſchools, and ſo many good heads have been broken formerly in the univerſities of London and of Paris, do not exiſt in nature. It is therefore as impoſſible to abſtract ideas of whiteneſs or blackneſs from all white or black things, as it is to abſtract an idea of humanity from all human exiſtence; or an idea of color from all things colored, as it is to abſtract an idea of animality from all animal exiſtence. In all theſe caſes, having no real eſſence to abſtract, we have nothing to abſtract.

Let us conſider, whether we are able to make ſuch abſtractions, when real eſſences are known to us, as they are in modes and relations. For my part, I know that I am not. I am utterly unable to elevate my mind from particulars to generals, as we muſt do in order to acquire Dr. Cudworth's apodectical knowledge, of which therefore I muſt be content to remain deprived. I know the real eſſence of triangularity, and can define it in one ſhort propoſition. But to contemplate triangularity, abſtracted from every triangular figure, is to my narrow and weak mind as impoſſible as to contemplate humanity, abſtracted

ſtracted from every human figure, and every human quality. He who can frame the idea of a triangle, which is neither right, obtuſe, nor acute-angled, nor, in ſhort, of any triangular ſpecies; but is all, and none of theſe, at once: he, I ſay, if in truth there is any ſuch he, muſt be of a ſpecies different from mine, as ſurely as he would be ſo, if his ſight could pierce to the center of the earth, or diſcern every frozen inhabitant of Saturn. Triangularity is ſo far from being no particular triangle, that it is every particular triangle: and no man, as I preſume, can think of a ſpace included by three lines that meet at three angles, without thinking of ſome one or more particular triangles. Triangularity can be no otherwiſe repreſented to the mind. The definition gives particular ideas, but is not itſelf an idea. I know the real eſſence of juſtice, and can define it ſeveral ways, as, for inſtance, by ſaying, after TULLY, "Juſtitiae primum munus eſt ut ne "cui quis noceat, niſi lacceſſitus injuria; deinde "ut communibus pro communibus utatur, pri-"vatis autem ut ſuis." But what then? Do theſe definitions, or their contraries, a conformity to one or the other of which conſtitutes every action juſt, or unjuſt, form, in any mind, one abſtract idea of juſtice? We can contemplate each of theſe apart, and compare any particular action with it; but we cannot abſtract any general nature, with which we may compare every action that falls under ſome one of theſe definitions. Juſtice is a word that denotes particular

natures, under a general term, but expreſſes no general nature.

If there were ſuch general natures as are ſuppoſed, they would exiſt in the mind, and be perceived there. They do not exiſt in the mind; for they are not perceived by it. They exiſt then no where, whatever PLATO might dream, or might ſay hypothetically and poetically. The mind creates real eſſences for it's own uſe; but that the mind abſtracts, even from theſe creatures of it's own, any general natures, is a mere poetical fiction, which has been adopted, like many other fictions, of the ſame author, for a philoſophical truth. All the real eſſences we know are ſo far from being uncreated, that they are creatures of the human mind; they are ſo far from being independent, that they are dependent on the will of man, as far as concerns their exiſting or not exiſting; they are ſo far from being ingenerable, unperiſhable, and even immutable, that they begin to be, and ceaſe to be, in the mind; and that whilſt they actually exiſt there, if they were not maintained by diſtinct names, and by a conſtant attention of the mind to them and to their names, they would fluctuate and vary without any preciſion or ſteadineſs.

When the Stagirite declared moſt dogmatically, that he would have HERACLITUS, CRATYLUS, and PROTAGORAS to know, that, beſides ſenſible things, which they ſuppoſed always to flow,

flow, and he admitted to be always mutable, there were other beings or entities, neither ſubject to motion, corruption, nor generation, but immovable eſſences, the objects of theoretical knowledge, of the firſt philoſophy, and of pure mathematics; when he ſpoke in ſuch high terms, I ſay, the flowing philoſophers might have told him that intellectual beings or entities were very much given to flow, as well as ſenſible things; and that immovable eſſences, how well ſoever fixed by definitions, were not always immovable even in his own mind, ſince they did not appear to be ſtrictly ſo in his writings.

After ſaying ſo much about theſe abſtract ideas, I muſt freely confeſs that I ſcarce comprehend what they are intended to be. They are ſeparate from matter, according to Aristotle. They are free from all corporeal ſympathy, according to Cudworth. Nay they are, even thoſe of them whoſe real eſſences we know, ſuch as triangularity and juſtice, imperfect ideas, ideas that cannot exiſt, ideas wherein ſome parts of ſeveral different and inconſiſtent ideas are put together, according to Mr. Locke. Thus abſtraction becomes as great a myſtery in philoſophy, as any that religion holds out to us: and I am ſo little able to unfold myſteries, that I might ſit forty years together in deep meditation over-againſt a white wall, as a Chineſe philoſopher is ſaid to have done, and to as little purpoſe as he, if I pretended to unfold this inexplicable ſort of

abſtraction. Who can help ſmiling, when he is told that by the help of ſuch ideas, and of certain ſelf-evident maxims, knowledge is a comprehenſion of things proleptically, or by way of anticipation, or à priori; and that abſtraction is that higher ſtation from whence the mind comprehends things in this manner, from whence by it's ſubtile ſharpneſs it penetrates into the eſſential profundity of body, of ſphericalneſs, triangularity, etc.

STRANGE effects of myſterious abſtraction! Strange foundations of eternal and immutable morality! They might be rejected with contempt, if they were abſurd only; but they are carried ſo far that they become profane, a ſort of metaphyſical blaſphemy, and deſerve indignation. Could I ſuſpect the leaſt neceſſary connection between ſuch opinions and the proofs of God's exiſtence, I ſhould not treat them as familiarly as I have done, and intend to do. But there is nothing which ſhocks me ſo much, in the treatiſe I ſpeak of, as the attempt to prove in a circle, that ſince univerſal notions, the ſuppoſed immediate objects of ſcience, are eternal and neceſſarily exiſtent, there is an eternal and neceſſarily exiſtent mind; and that, ſince there is ſuch a mind, there muſt be ſuch ideas and notions as the author aſſumes. But it may be worth while to ſet this reaſoning down a little more at large.

"SINCE we cannot conceive that there was ever

" a time when it was not yet actually true that " the three angles of a triangle are equal to two " right angles, or that equals added to equals " produce equals, and the like in other inſtances; " theſe intelligible natures, theſe neceſſary ve- " rities, had a being before the material world " and all particular intellects had any." Again: " Since theſe natures, theſe verities, are, accord- " ing to PLATO, nothing but noëmatá, objective " notions or knowledges, that is, in good Eng- " liſh, objects of thought, they could not exiſt " without ſome mind in which they were com- " prehended. There is therefore an eternal mind " which comprehended them always, or rather a " mind which is itſelf theſe natures, theſe veri- " ties, theſe abſtract ideas." Thus again, and to reaſon quite round the circle: " Since there " is an eternal mind, that Being muſt always " comprehend himſelf, the extent of his own " power, the ideas of all poſſible things. Now " theſe natures, theſe verities, are included in " theſe ideas. Our abſtract ideas and univerſal " notions are therefore eternal and ſelf exiſtent " like God himſelf. If there were none ſuch, " there would be no God. But there are ſuch, " becauſe there is a God, on whom however " they are independent. They cannot be modi- " fications of matter, they muſt be therefore mo- " difications of an eternal mind. Every thing " that is imperfect muſt needs depend on ſome- " thing that is perfect in the ſame kind. There " is therefore a cognation, or connection, be-

"tween our created minds and the increated "mind. Our imperfect intellect muſt be there- "fore a derivative participation of the perfect in- "tellect."

THIS rhapſody of jargon is faithfully extracted, and, for the moſt part, in CUDWORTH's own words.

A CLOSE affinity between the divine and the human mind, and a certain ſameneſs of ideas and notions, is the common boaſt of metaphyſical theology: and father THOMASSIN, and many other learned and good men of all communions, have talked as profanely on the ſubject as CUDWORTH. Their very great learning ſeduced them into error: they were too good ſcholars to be good philoſophers: and whilſt their minds were filled with the thoughts of PLATO and ARISTOTLE, of St. AUSTIN, and other refining, as well as declaiming, chriſtian fathers, there was no room for their own; or their own were grafted on theſe, and extended and improved from them. "La paſſion même que nous avons pour la verité "nous trompe quelquefois, lorſqu'elle eſt trop "ardente. Mais le deſir de paroître ſavant eſt "ce qui nous empêche le plus d'acquerir une "ſcience véritable."* It is father MALBRANCHE who ſpeaks thus: and he was himſelf a great example of what is here ſaid; for tho his ſublime genius could not ſtoop to copy ſervilely, as others

* Rechèrche, etc. Lib. ii. p. 2. c. 7.

have done, yet he took his hints and his manner from PLATO and St. AUSTIN principally, and added one beautiful whimſy to another, till he builded up a ſyſtem that carries no conviction to the mind, and only ſerves to give great admiration of the author.

II.

OTHER divines, beſides CUDWORTH, have aſſumed that God knows according to our manner of knowing, by the help of ideas. Thus CLARKE, in his book of Demonſtrations, which has had much more reputation than it deſerves, aſſumes that goodneſs and juſtice in God are the ſame as in our ideas, and that the relations, proportions, and rationes of things are abſolutely and neceſſarily what they appear to be to the underſtandings of all intelligent beings; among whom he muſt needs comprehend the Supreme Being, ſince he makes theſe relations, proportions, and rationes of things to be the rule or law by which God proceeds, and for his obſervation of which he appeals to man. Thus he affirms, at leaſt, that God knows by the help of ideas. But MALBRANCHE outſhoots him, and confines the ſupreme all-perfect Being to this human manner of knowing. He allows him no other. He denies that he can have any other. The ideas of bodies and of all other objects "que nous "n'appercevons point par eux-mêmes," becauſe they are exterior to the ſoul, are perceived by us for

for no other reaſon but this, they are in God: in him we ſee them. All the ideas of created beings muſt be in God: it was abſolutely neceſſary that they ſhould be ſo; becauſe if they had not been ſo, he could not have created ſuch beings, "Puiſqu'autrement il n'auroint pas pû les produire." He could no more have made ADAM, if he had not had the idea of ADAM in his mind, than KNELLER could have painted your picture, if he had not had the idea of you in his mind.

HEATHEN divines built their theology, not only on phyſical, but on moral, philoſophy. They made gods, not only of the elements and the parts of this material ſyſtem, but of the faculties of the human intellect, as of memory; of the paſſions of the mind, as of hope, fear, love; of our affections and habits, as of piety, of juſtice, of virtue, and ſo on. Now it ſeems that if this antient polytheiſm and idolatry was to be renewed, the doctrine I have combated would contribute extremely to the introduction of it. Theſe abſtract ideas, every one of which is an eternal eſſence, an intelligible nature, an incorporeal ſubſtance, might paſs for proper objects of adoration; ſince they are repreſented as eternal patterns, according to which all things are made or done; as eternal principles, by a participation of which every thing is what it is. Why ſhould they not be adored? They are independent on God: nay God is ſo far dependent on them, that

his will is determined, and his conduct and operations are directed, by them.

Our proneneſs to meaſure all other beings by ourſelves grows up into ſtrange extravagance when we preſume to meaſure in ſome ſort even God by this rule. God has given us a manner of knowing fitted to our ſyſtem, and ſufficient for all our real buſineſs in it. We can conceive no other. But is there then no other? Is the poſitive nature of God, is the extent of his power, confined to the limits of our conceptions? There is "an eye which never winks, a ſun which never "ſets:" but, with Dr. Cudworth's leave, the abſurdity lies on the ſide of the philoſopher who pretends to ſee with this eye, and to walk in the brightneſs or lucidity, to uſe his word, of this ſun; not on the ſide of a modeſt and humble theiſt, who is far from all metaphyſical preſumption and theological arrogance, and therefore dares not aſſume ſo much in his own favor, nor in favor of any created being. Such a man will think that he makes a much more appoſite ſimile, when he ſays that we are ſhut up in one of thoſe dark caverns of the univerſe, mentioned in the Phaedo; that there we grope about after knowledge, not by the light of the ſun, but by that of a ſmall and dim taper. This light, whatever it is, was beſtowed on us by God. He gave us our light. He did not give us his own. They who think in this manner cannot be ſuſpected of being too near a kin to thoſe antient theologues Aris-

TOTLE

TOTLE ſpeaks of, who fetched the original of God and all things out of night. They who think in the other would do well to conſider whether they are not too near a kin to thoſe, who have promoted in all ages, of heatheniſm and of chriſtianity, ſuperſtition in religion, paradox in philoſophy, and enthuſiaſm in both.

IT may be ſaid, you know it has been ſaid by one I love and honor *, "that the immediate object of knowledge being called an idea, there "is no inconvenience in ſaying that God knows "objects, that he knows ideas in the proper ſenſe "of the word, which is LOCKE's ſenſe; that altho "our conception of God's knowledge, or any "other of his attributes, be infinitely inadequate, "yet he ſaw no abſurdity in ſuppoſing that human knowledge hath ſome ſimilitude to the divine, as a thing finite, and imperfect, and weak, "and ſmall, can have to that which is infinite and "all-perfect; nor in ſuppoſing, with the ſcripture, that we are made in the likeneſs of "God; nor in ſuppoſing, with the greek poet, "that we are his offſpring; and, with the latin, "that we contain divinae particulam aurae." It ſeems evident to him, "that intellect is above "the powers of motion and figure, and that it "is of kind altogether incorporeal." I reſpect the authority which made this objection to what I have ſaid, and ſhall therefore go as far as I can in ſubmiſſion to it. I ſee no inconveniency in

* B. of C.

ſpeaking of the divine ideas, when we ſpeak of the divine knowledge. On the contrary, I ſee much conveniency in it; becauſe I apprehend that we can neither conceive any thing, nor explain our conceptions on many occaſions, concerning God's knowledge, without aſcribing to him hypothetically the ſole manner of knowing that is known to us. But I think it, however, both abſurd and profane to pronounce dogmatically, that this is God's manner of knowing, that he has no other, and that without the help of ideas he could neither govern the world as he governs it, nor have made it as he made it. To ſay, in allegorical or poetical ſtyle, that we are made in the image of God, that we are his offspring, or that we contain divinae particulam aurae, may paſs for ſome of thoſe images by which we endeavour, and often improperly enough, to help our own thoughts, and the communication of them: but ſurely they are not to be employed in the didactic ſtyle, and ſo as to paſs, not for diſtant images of truths, that we cannot contemplate nearly and directly, but for real truths which we do ſo contemplate. I do not believe that matter can draw intellect, to uſe an expreſſion of L'ABBADIE, out of it's own boſom; neither do I believe that the incorporeity of the ſoul can be proved from the non-exiſtence of matter, which my right reverend friend takes to be a demonſtrable point. Intellect is certainly above the mere powers of motion and figure, according to all the ideas we have of them; and therefore I embrace very readily

dily the opinion of thoſe who aſſume that God, who has, without any color of doubt, notwithſtanding ſome logical and trifling cavils, the power of doing it, has been pleaſed to ſuperadd to ſeveral ſyſtems of matter, in ſuch manner and in ſuch proportions as his infinite wiſdom has thought fit, the power of thinking. Every other hypotheſis ſeems to me unconceivable; and this, of which ſo much has been ſaid here, particularly dangerous. It might ſerve to introduce polytheiſm, or it is not very far from ſpinoziſm. I could be an anthropomorphite, and believe the human figure to be God's figure, as ſoon as I could believe the human intellect to be God's intellect, and the modifications of the former to be the modifications of the latter. If I was abſurd enough to be perſuaded of this, I ſhould be abſurd enough eaſily to believe, with the help of intelligible natures and incorporeal ſubſtances, or ſubſtances quaſi incorporeal, as many Gods as men; and to erect a larger pantheon than the gods of the heathen or your ſaints require. If I avoided this extreme, the ſame hypotheſis might draw me into another, and I might perſuade myſelf, that, ſince there is an univerſal mind, in which all ideas are contained, and of which every particular mind is a participation, every intelligence, down to the loweſt, is a modification of the ſame mind, as every material ſyſtem is a modification of the ſame matter; which would bid fair for a compoſition with SPINOZA: and two ſubſtances might render a Supreme Being as unneceſſary as one ſubſtance, to which

which the modifications of both kinds are aſcribed in a manner leſs conformable to our ideas, and much more repugnant to theology.

I HAVE as good a right to deny, as the moſt dogmatical writer can poſſibly have to affirm, that the Supreme Being knows by the intervention of ideas. Nay the negative is more probable than the affirmative on many accounts, and particularly on this, that our manner of knowing ſeems neither immediate, abſolute, nor perfect enough to be aſcribed to him. To talk poſitively of the divine nature and attributes, and to determine, on our ſuppoſed knowledge of them, any thing more than we are able to collect from his works, and the proceedings of his providence, is very great preſumption, tho the common practice of divines. But to deny concerning them whatever implies the leaſt defect or imperfection, is highly reaſonable, and eſſential to true theiſm. Of the excellencies of God's nature we can have no adequate ideas: they are infinite. But this we can know moſt certainly, that thoſe things, which are ſhort even of the excellencies we are able to comprehend, ought not to be aſcribed to him. That the firſt cauſe of all things is an intelligent cauſe, may be proved invincibly à poſteriori, and can be proved no other way: after which it will not require much logic to demonſtrate à priori that the all-perfect Being muſt be omniſcient, as well as ſelf-exiſtent. But how he knows, or what knowledge is in him, we are unable to ſay. We may frame

frame dark and confuſed notions of knowledge vaſtly ſuperior to our own in kind, as well as degree; and we ſhould do much better to reſt in theſe, dark and confuſed as they are, than to frame others, which, being deduced from our own, are ſeemingly too adequate to be really true. The paſt, the preſent, and the future, as we conceive them, are known alike to the Supreme Being, not by the perception, the retention, or the anticipation of ideas, but in a manner inconceivable by us: for there is, I think, a plain fallacy in this expreſſion, that the immediate object of knowledge being called an idea, we may ſay that God knows an object, that he knows an idea. When we ſpeak of objects of human knowledge, we allude to the ſenſe of ſeeing; and we apply, very properly, the alluſion to the inward perceptions of the mind. But ſurely no man, who tries to elevate his notions of the all-perfect Being as much as he can above the low level of humanity, for ſo I will call what we know of the human nature, can think the ſame alluſion applicable to the Divinity. Outward and inward ſenſe have a great connexity in the human ſyſtem. The former gives occaſion to the latter, they help one another, and both have their objects. But it will no more follow that God thinks like man, than that he ſees like man. He may have conſcious knowledge of all things poſſible, as we have conſcious knowledge of our own exiſtence, a knowledge which prevents even thought, ſo far from being originally, whatever we make it afterwards, an object of thought. But further. When God

God is ſaid to know objects, he is ſaid to know ideas. The words are taken ſynonymouſly on this occaſion. But we muſt diſtinguiſh them. A knowledge of things as they are, and a knowledge of the ideas of them, are extremely different, as different as immediate and reflected light, as abſolute and relative knowledge. Every thing we know is known to us in the ſecond manner; nothing in the firſt. Every thing is known to God in the firſt: and he has no need of knowing any thing in the ſecond. As it would be abſurd to ſay that God receives ideas from external objects, ſo is it no leſs abſurd to ſay either that the divine mind combines and abſtracts ideas, or that complex and abſtract ideas exiſt in it, or co-exiſt with it, like ſo many incorporeal independent ſubſtances, by the contemplation of which God has, and PLATO and his ſcholars aſſure us that man may have, real knowledge.

THESE hypothetical reflections, on which I lay no more weight than they deſerve, will ſerve at leaſt to ſhew how little ought to be laid on thoſe dogmas to which they are oppoſed.

IF the Supreme Being does not know by the help of ideas, the chain of Dr. CUDWORTH's reaſoning is broke in the firſt link of it; for there are then no ſuch eternal abſtract ideas, either in or out of the ſupreme mind, as have been ſuppoſed; and all the incorporeal ſubſtances, with the verities clinging like ivy about them, that have been

ſaid

ſaid to exiſt eternally and independently, neither exiſt, nor ever did exiſt, out of the imaginations of metaphyſicians, thoſe fruitful nurſeries of phantaſtic ſcience.

SHOULD any one aſk, like CUDWORTH, and the ſixth objector to the metaphyſical meditations of DES CARTES, at what time it was not yet actually true that a triangle has three angles equal to two right angles, or when it began to be true that twice four are eight? it would be a full and ſufficient anſwer to ſay, that the time when neither theſe truths, nor the ideas from a compariſon of which they reſult, did exiſt, was that wherein God had not yet created any intelligence whoſe manner of knowing was by the intervention of ideas, and that theſe ideas began to exiſt when ſuch intelligent beings were actually created. There never was a time when two and two were unequal to four: But there was, we may conceive, a time when their equality did not exiſt, becauſe no numeral things exiſted, nor any mind to compare them except the ſupreme mind; which, being aſſumed not to know by the help of ideas, can no more be ſaid to compare than to perceive them, or to perform any operations about them. If he who made this anſwer was preſſed by arguments drawn from the conſequences of it, he would have at leaſt the advantage of retorting arguments drawn from the conſequences of the other hypotheſis, and of ſhewing that he, and thoſe learned divines he oppoſed, were in a caſe very common to theiſts and atheiſts

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in their diſputes. He had difficulties in his way: they had abſurdities in theirs. He would own the difficulty of accounting for knowledge independently of ideas: but he would demonſtrate the abſurdity of maintaining that knowledge in God is dependent on ideas, and theſe ideas independent on him. He would have the further advantage of ſtopping his inquiries where the means of knowledge ſtop; of confeſſing his ignorance, and of preſerving that awful reſpect for the Supreme Being which divines are apt, above all other men, to loſe by reaſoning about his nature and his attributes, as well as his providence, in a ſtyle and manner that no other theiſt preſumes to uſe, and to which they have no better pretence than that which the taylor gives them by making gowns for them, and coats for every one elſe.

Were men, even they who affect to examine like philoſophers, and to inveſtigate truth in all the receſſes of it, leſs ignorant of that which is neareſt to them, of themſelves, and leſs liable to be blinded by their affections and paſſions, by the force of habit and the determining influence of ſelf-intereſt, it would not be ſo eaſy as it is, to impoſe ſuch high opinions of the human, and ſuch low opinions of the divine, nature. In attempting the firſt, metaphyſicians and divines run the riſk of having the conſcious knowledge of every man oppoſed to them; for every man knows, or may know, that the faculties of his mind, and his means of knowledge, are not ſuch as they would perſuade

perſuade him that they are. Every man has reaſon to ſuſpect, from the natural imperfections, from the accidental infirmities, from the ſenſible growth, maturity, and decay of that which thinks in him, and from it's apparent dependence on the body, that his ſoul, whatever it be, has no affinity with the all-perfect Being. To maintain therefore an opinion of this affinity, the ſame perſons have recourſe to another method, from man, whom we can ſee, to God, whom we cannot ſee; from man, of whom we have intuitive, to God, of whom we have demonſtrative, knowledge alone, and which goes little further than a certainty of his exiſtence, and of his infinite power and wiſdom, but not ſo far as to reach his manner of exiſting, or his manner of knowing. The knowledge of men is confined to ideas. They cannot raiſe it higher in imagination, in their own, nor in that of other men. They try therefore to reduce the divine knowledge to their own low level; and, as ſtrange as it is, it is true that they ſucceed.

Let them not ſucceed with you and me. This world, which is the ſcene of our action, is the ſcene of our knowledge: we can derive none that is real from any other, whatever intellectual worlds we may imagine. Let us conſider then how it is conſtituted, in what relations we ſtand, to what ends we are directed. Let us truſt to pure intellect a little leſs than we are adviſed to do, and to our ſenſes a little more. When we have examined and compared the informations we receive from theſe,

theſe, and have reaſoned à poſteriori from the works to the will of God, from the conſtitution of the ſyſtem wherein we are placed by him to our intereſt and duty in it, we ſhall have laid the foundations of morality on a rock, inſtead of laying them on the moving lands, or the hollow ground, that metaphyſics point out to us. Thus we ſhall know, as God deſigned we ſhould know, and purſue, as far as our part extends, the plan of infinite wiſdom. Inſtead of amuſing ourſelves vainly with a falſe ſublime, let us keep ſoberly within the bounds of our nature; let us reaſon cautiouſly, pronounce modeſtly, practiſe ſincerely, and hope humbly. To do this, is to be wiſe and good: and to be wiſe and good, is better far than to be a philoſopher, a metaphyſician, or even a divine.

THE law of their nature is the concern of all men alike. All men are, therefore, able alike to diſcover this law, and the conſtitution of things from which it is derived. All men do not diſcover it indeed alike, tho all men, even the moſt ſavage and ignorant, have, as I believe, ſome imperfect notions of it, which obſervation and experience force into their minds. If there are any creatures of human figure, to whom even thus much cannot be aſcribed, which I do not believe, they are ranked as improperly under the human ſpecies, as they would be if they had a different figure. Ignorance about the law of nature, like ignorance about many other truths, to which no man

man can refuſe his aſſent when they are propoſed to his underſtanding, is due to ſome or more of thoſe many reaſons, by which men are diverted from the purſuit of attainable knowledge, or ſtopped in it: and their errors, in this caſe, may be imputed, in ſome degree, to the ſame cauſes, as well as to affections, paſſions, and the force of cuſtom. But philoſophers, divines, and lawyers, who diveſt, or ſhould diveſt, themſelves of affections and paſſions, and pay no regard to cuſtom, run, by a contrary method, into a variety of contrary opinions concerning one of the plaineſt and moſt important objects of our thoughts. The former ſtop ſhort of that knowledge which lies within the bounds of human comprehenſion. The latter overlook it, whilſt they aim at knowledge that is unattainable, becauſe it lies beyond the bounds of human nature, and therefore of human comprehenſion.

THE notions, on which CUDWORTH endeavours to ground eternal and immutable morality, have prevailed much, with ſome difference in the repreſentation of them, among antient and modern theiſts. Let us mention two of the latter only, beſides himſelf, GROTIUS and CLARKE.

ONE would be tempted to think that when theſe men aſſert the eternity, independency, and immutability of the great principles of the law of our nature, they mean all this comparatively only; comparatively with civil laws, which are novel,

dependent on the will of man, and mutable at his pleaſure. One might think it ſtrange too that they ſhould not diſtinguiſh between the divine preſcience, and the divine inſtitution; or imagine a law, made for man, co-eternal with God. But their theological purpoſe in maintaining an opinion liable to ſo many objections, and quite unneceſſary to the eſtabliſhment of our moral obligations on the firmeſt foundation, will appear in the courſe of theſe reflections. Divines, among whom the great lawyer we have mentioned has a juſt right to be reckoned, ſee far before them, and are determined in laying of principles by the conſequences they intend to draw.

PUFFENDORF * is of a contrary opinion to GROTIUS. He cenſures very juſtly thoſe, who, like him, endeavour to join with God any coeval, extrinſecal principle, which they aſſume that he was obliged to follow in aſſigning the forms and eſſences of things. He maintains that the actions of men are perfectly indifferent, if you ſet aſide the conſideration of all law divine and human; that the morality of actions in a ſocial creature is derived from that ſocial nature which God has been pleaſed to give him, and not from any immutable neceſſity; and he ſhews how ill thoſe paſſages of ſcripture, which GROTIUS quotes, are applied to prove an original law ſo truly common to God and man, that God permits himſelf to be judged according to it.

* Law of nature and nations, L. i. c. 2.

CLARKE

CLARKE has, in our time, diſtinguiſhed himſelf in defence of the doctrine we oppoſe. He has made it the firſt propoſition in his Evidences of natural and revealed religion, with a magiſterial air, and all the confidence of thoſe men who talk on every occaſion of nothing leſs than demonſtration. "Fidenter ſane, ut ſolent iſti, nihil tam "verens, quam ne dubitare aliqua de re videre-"tur*." This propoſition, however, on which he preſumes to reſt ſo important a cauſe, as on the angular ſtone of all religion, will appear to be abſurd and inconſiſtent, when it is once analyſed; and his proofs of it will appear to prove nothing, or to prove what is out of diſpute. Thus I think: and if I think rightly, there is the more reaſon to demoliſh this falſe foundation becauſe it is as eaſy, as neceſſary, to lay one that is undeniably true.

THE general abſurdity and inconſiſtency of this propoſition lies here. The demonſtrator confounds in it two contrary propoſitions; and ſliding, inſenſibly to many readers, from that which no reaſonable man can admit, into that which every reaſonable man muſt admit, he means nothing by a pomp of words, or he means to make the proofs of the latter paſs for proofs of the former. He aſſerts that neceſſary and eternal relations of different things to one another, and the conſequent fitneſs and unfitneſs of application of

* TULLY De nat. deor. Lib. i. ſpeaking of VELLEIUS the epicurean.

theſe things and of their relations, determine the will of God always and neceſſarily to chuſe to act only what is agreeable to juſtice, equity, goodneſs, and truth, that is, to thoſe abſtract ideas, in order to the welfare of the whole univerſe. Theſe expreſſions lead me, they cannot but lead me, to underſtand that the ſame doctrine is intended, as, we have ſaid, no reaſonable man, no good theiſt moſt certainly, can admit, the doctrine of eternal independent eſſences, as it has been taught. But the ſtate of the queſtion is changed at once: for, after aſſerting that all ſubordinate rational beings ought to determine their wills, and conduct their actions, by the ſame eternal rules by which God proceeds in governing, and therefore proceeded in creating, the world; the inſtances brought to prove it are all relative to our human ſtate, and the rules are ſuch as could be no rules antecedently to the exiſtence of ſubordinate rational beings, and moral agents. Let us mention two or three of theſe inſtances. That God is infinitely ſuperior to man, is as clear no doubt, as that infinity is larger than a point, or eternity longer than a moment. That men ſhould worſhip and obey God, for I dare not uſe theological familiarity and talk of imitating God, is as fit, as it is true that they depend on him. In ſhort, general benevolence, fidelity in particular compacts, and all the duties of natural religion, ariſe moſt evidently from a fitneſs of application of different things, and their different relations, ariſing from the nature which God, according to his good pleaſure has beſtowed upon

us, and from that of the ſyſtem which he has conſtituted, and wherein he has placed us. That God is ſuperior to man, and that man ought to worſhip and obey God, are truths that have exiſted ever ſince there was ſuch a rational creature as man to perceive them, and to ſtand in ſuch a relation to God. That benevolence, fidelity, and every other moral obligation has exiſted likewiſe, ever ſince there was ſuch a moral agent as man to be obliged by them, and to ſtand in ſuch relations as we ſtand to one another. Is it not enough that we go as high as our nature, to diſcover the laws of it? To what purpoſe do we make that intricate, by metaphyſical abſtractions, which God has made ſo extremely plain?

I MIGHT aſk, to what purpoſe this kind of legerdemain is employed in reaſoning? After Dr. CUDWORTH has talked dogmatically of eternal, immutable, independent natures, it comes out that he does not mean real natures, but the ideas that we frame of natures that we aſſume. Much in the ſame manner, after Dr. CLARKE has talked, at leaſt as dogmatically, of an eternal rule by which God has always acted neceſſarily, and of juſtice, equity, goodneſs, and truth, as of intelligible natures which have always exiſted, and agreeably to which God has always directed his conduct, he proceeds to talk of this very rule not as a rule eternally reſulting from the eternal and independent differences of things and of their relations, but as a rule reſulting from a ſyſtem of beings

whom God created in time, and from the relation in which he conſtituted them to himſelf and to one another. No man will deny that a ſquare is double to a triangle of equal baſe and height, from all eternity if the doctor pleaſes, and rather than engage in ſuch uſeleſs diſquiſitions: but every man of common ſenſe will deny that there could be a law of human nature before any ſuch nature was in being. CLARKE raiſes man firſt to act by the ſame rule, by which God made and governs the univerſe: and after that, he reſtrains infinite knowledge and wiſdom to act by the ſame rule by which the creatures of God determine, or ought to determine, their wills, and according to the ideas that they derive from the contemplation of their own ſyſtem of being; that is, of a ſmall, and doubtleſs an inconſiderable, part of the univerſe, not, by immenſe degrees, of the whole. "Quo teneam Protea nodo?" By the firſt we are bewildered in metaphyſical abſtractions, that have no tendency to promote morality; and by the laſt, divines obtain a latitude of making what hypotheſes they pleaſe, and a pretence of reaſoning with the ſame licence about the deſigns and conduct of the living God, as they would take in reaſoning about thoſe of a dead, but not of a living, monarch. This is the true theological ſecret: and I believe you will think it is ſo, when we come to conſider CLARKE's doctrine concerning the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, and the uſe he makes of it.

But to carry on the analyſe of this firſt propoſition. We are told in it that theſe eternal and neceſſary differences of things, for ſuch they are ſtill called, cauſe it to be the duty of men, or lay an obligation upon them, to act according to this rule, ſeparate from the conſideration of the will of God, and from any expectation of reward, or fear of puniſhment, annexed either by natural conſequence or by poſitive appointment. Now ſurely this muſt be thought a very odd method of promoting natural religion, and giving evidences of it, ſince it puts the atheiſt and the theiſt into the ſame caſe; and as rules were inconſiſtently jumbled together before, ſo characters are now. The atheiſt may have regard to natural differences alone, and to the conſequences of acting or not acting according to them. He may ſee that altho human actions, conſidered merely as natural, and abſtractedly from all relations, circumſtances, and conſequences, might be deemed abſolutely indifferent, yet no human action can be ſo conſidered. The atheiſt, therefore, may think himſelf very truly under an obligation of intereſt, ariſing from the different conſequences of his actions, tho he acknowledges no divine legiſlature: and he would laugh very juſtly at the man who ſhould tell him that he was not obliged to paſs over the bridge, tho he might be drowned in the torrent, becauſe there was no act of parliament for it. The theiſt indeed muſt think himſelf, in this reſpect, under an obligation of duty, as well as in-

tereſt. Whatever actions are naturally good or evil, muſt appear to him to be ſo morally. They derive their particular natures from the conſtitution of our ſyſtem. They might not have been what they are, if this ſyſtem had not been what it is: and this ſyſtem could not have been what it is, if God, who made it, had not willed that it ſhould be ſo. Nay, even on the ſuppoſition of eternal neceſſary differences, and independent natures, it would be ſtill true that the will of God conſtitutes the obligation of duty. It would be falſe to aſſert, in the terms of this propoſition, that the ſuppoſed eternal neceſſary differences of things conſtitute it alone. How independent ſoever we ſuppoſe the different natures of things to be, it depended moſt certainly on the will of God, who made the ſyſtem, to introduce them into it as he thought fit. If he did not make, he aſſembled, he ordered them; and whatever obligation reſults from them, in this ſyſtem, reſults from them therefore by his will, and is impoſed by it. Once more, and to conclude this analyſe. It is plainly falſe to aſſert that men are obliged to obſerve the laws of nature on abſtract conſiderations, and for reaſons alone of the ſame kind, as thoſe which determine them to agree about proportions or diſproportions in geometry and arithmetic. The advantages or diſadvantages, annexed by natural conſequence to the obſervation or breach of the law of nature, do certainly determine the atheiſt who obſerves it without believing a law in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word, but believing an obligation

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in the ſtricteſt: and it is manifeſt that no other conſideration can, nor, on his principles, ought to determine him. The theiſt is determined by the ſame advantages or diſadvantages ſtill more ſtrongly, becauſe he looks on them as annexed, not only by natural conſequence, but by poſitive and divine appointment. I ſpeak of the theiſt as a philoſopher only. If we conſidered him as a chriſtian, we ſhould conſider him under the influence of further and greater advantages or diſadvantages, annexed by the ſame divine appointment. Thus the matter ſtands very clearly: and tho men may puzzle it by playing with the words inducement, obligation, will of a ſuperior, law, and others, they cannot alter the ſtate of it.

RIGHT reaſon conſiſts in a conformity with truth, and truth in a conformity with nature. Nature, or the aggregate of things which are, is the great ſource from whence all the rivulets of real knowledge muſt be derived. When we cannot go up, and as far as we cannot go up thither, we muſt remain in ignorance: and we may be the more contented to remain ſo in ſeveral caſes, becauſe we go up in ſeveral to the ſpring head, or at leaſt as far towards it, as the Author of all nature thought it neceſſary that creatures in our rank of being ſhould go. It is a ſtrong inſtance of the perverſity of the human will, but it is true in fact, that men attempt often to go beyond nature, for no better a reaſon than this, becauſe they cannot go up to it; or than this, becauſe they do not find that

that to be, which imagination had told them might be. Theſe men are metaphyſicians: and by this method they have fallen at all times into error, or into ſomething worſe perhaps than error, but worſe ſurely than ignorance, into doubt, perplexity, needleſs diſquiſitions, and endleſs diſputation. Thus it has fared with the greateſt ſcholars, and with men of the niceſt diſcernment and acuteneſs, with CUDWORTH, for inſtance, and with CLARKE. In all theſe caſes, the ſafeſt ſide is that of ignorance: if he may be called ignorant, who keeps within the obvious bounds of nature and truth, and preſumes to continue the purſuit of knowledge no further. Ignorance belongs more properly to him who is thought to know, whilſt he tranſgreſſes theſe bounds, and calls every hypotheſis a demonſtration.

THAT the philoſophers we have mentioned are guilty of this abſurdity, has been ſhewn: and it would not be hard to ſhew, by many proofs, that whilſt they pretend to eſtabliſh morality, they do real injury to theiſm. They make the incomprehenſible Being, in a certain ſenſe, too comprehenſible, and the knowledge of the all-perfect Being too nearly allied to the imperfection of the human.

THINGS are what they are by nature, not by will, ſays CUDWORTH. Would it not be more conſiſtent with theiſm to ſay, things are what they are by immutable natures, which the will of God has

has given them? Would it not be more within the bounds of human conception, and therefore more reasonable, to say, that God constituted these natures in constituting this system; than to assume that these natures, which are contained in our system, and to the knowledge of which we arrive no other way than by the gradual knowledge that we acquire of our system, are independent on it and on the God who made it?

The reason of things, deduced from their differences, from their different relations, and from the different consequences of their applications, may be sufficient for the atheist. He may refer the whole to the powers and operations of something, he knows not what, but something self-existent and eternal, which he thinks fit to call the universe, or universal nature. The theist is not so content. The reason of things is to him that clue by which he conducts himself in discovering the existence of God, and the will of God, as far as man is an object of it. But the will of God is something less, and the reason of things is something more, in the esteem of such of these men as call themselves divines. An eternal reason of things, arising from their independent natures, and known to man, as well as to God, is, according to these philosophers and divines, the true criterion of moral good and evil, the rule by which the Creator and the creature are obliged alike to act; with this difference, arising from the perfections of one and the imperfections of the other, God can-

not act otherwiſe, man may. Is it not to be apprehended that men, tainted with ſuch notions as theſe, will reaſon conſtantly à priori, and from them, down to their moral obligations: the conſequence of which may be, that theſe obligations will become as unfixed and as fluctuating in their minds, as general and abſtract ideas uſually are? Is it not to be apprehended that they will never condeſcend to reaſon à poſteriori, and from the actual conſtitution of things, up to the will of God and the duty of man; the conſequence of which would be to eſtabliſh a rule of judgment concerning the great principles of moral obligations, as invariable as the obligations themſelves?

THESE metaphyſical divines are, for this reaſon, the more to be condemned, that, whilſt they pretend to knowledge, that neither men nor angels, I preſume, are capable of having, knowledge of divine ideas, and of the rule by which infinite wiſdom governs, and whilſt they would entice us by learned language, vague expreſſions, and falſe airs of demonſtration, to ſeek the laws of our nature out of the ſcene of our nature, and beyond the reach of any clear conceptions we are able to have; this very law is enacted in all the works of God, promulgated in terms the moſt proportionable to human conception, and writ in characters ſo plain that he who runs may read them.

THE great principles of moral truth are as much founded in the nature of things, as thoſe of mathematical

matical truth: and it is not a little leſs abſurd to contradict the former by our words or actions, than to deny the latter. If the latter of theſe have an advantage in this reſpect, that the demonſtrations of them are carried on with greater ſteadineſs and preciſion, by the immediate and joint aſſiſtance of ſenſe and intellect; the former have an advantage, for ſuch it may be reckoned, of another kind. We perceive the truth of both with equal evidence; but as the former are much more important to us than the latter, we may be ignorant of all mathematical, we cannot be ſo of all moral, truth. We diſcover one, the other diſcovers itſelf; it obtrudes itſelf on the mind, and the mind perceives it with greater ſatisfaction. He who demonſtrates that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that a ſquare is double to a triangle of equal baſe and height, has a dry inward complacency. But he who contemplates the obvious advantages of benevolence and juſtice to ſociety, and of ſociety to mankind, will feel a pleaſure much more ſenſible: and the ſame proportion will hold in all the progreſs the mind makes to diſcover mathematical, and moral truth.

III.

IF any man ſhould advance, that we ought to proceed on the known principles of mathematics, not becauſe there are ſuch in nature, but becauſe mathematicians have made an agreement

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or compact to proceed upon them as if there were ſuch, I ſuſpect that he would be eſteemed mad. What then was HOBBES, his predeceſſors, and his ſucceſſors, who affirmed that all diſtinction between moral good and evil, juſt and unjuſt, is eſtabliſhed ſolely by civil inſtitution; and that our moral obligations are derived from the laws of ſociety, not from the law of nature? This extravagant ſyſtem has been over and over refuted by many writers of our own and other countries. Some reflections, ſuch as my firſt thoughts ſuggeſt to me, I too will beſtow upon it. They ſhall not be long: and whether they are new or no, they ſhall not be copied from any one. It ſeems then to me that civil ſocieties could not have been formed, nor the diſtinction of juſt and unjuſt, nor the honeſtum and decorum of life have been eſtabliſhed, if there had not been, antecedently, ſuch a law of nature as HOBBES denies, and directly oppoſite to that which he ſuppoſes. Your great predeceſſors, AMPHION and ORPHEUS, would have ſtrung their lyres to little purpoſe, if there had not been a correſponding uniſon in the human conſtitution. The letter of the fable would have proved true, as ſoon as the moral of it; ſtones would have leaped into order, and have builded themſelves into walls; tigers and wolves would have grown tame and have formed peaceful ſocieties, as ſoon as men, if there had not been a law of nature peculiar to man: there was therefore ſuch a law. We may conſider man in a ſtate of nature as an artleſs, but we muſt conſider him in no

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ſtate as an irrational, creature: and to have been ſuch a creature as HOBBES repreſents him, he muſt have been rather irrational than artleſs. The proof that this philoſopher brings to ſhew that man is made by diſcipline, that is, the diſcipline of civil or political government, and not by nature, fit for ſociety, is a ſtrange one indeed. He ſays, that "Societies are confederacies;" which is true in a proper ſenſe: "that the force of "the conventions, by which they are framed, is "unknown to children and illiterate people, and "the utility of them to thoſe who never experi-"enced the evils that ariſe from the want of ſo-"ciety ..... that it is manifeſt therefore (all "men being born children) that all men are born "unfit for ſociety, and that many, perhaps the "greateſt number, remain ſome how or other "unfit for it as long as they live: that all theſe "however, the adult as well as infants, have the "human nature:" and from hence he draws the concluſion I have mentioned. Now for thoſe who never experience the evils that men are expoſed to out of ſociety, it is enough to ſay that they feel, and muſt feel, without the help of this contraſt, unleſs they are idiots, the benefits of ſociety; and for the reſt, his argument is no better than this would be: All men are born infants, infants have not the uſe of ſpeech, ſome men are born dumb, and have it not during their whole lives; men are therefore by their nature incapable, or unfit to ſpeak. If men were for any time, for years or ages, in that ſtate of war and confuſion

ſion which HOBBES aſſumes to be their natural ſtate, it would not follow that every one had, by nature, a right to do what every one had, by particular circumſtances and contingency of events, the power to do. It would only follow that inſtinct determines ſooner, and appetite and paſſion more ſtrongly, than reaſon. It would only follow that the ſpring of human nature exerted it's force, before the balance, which is deſigned to controll and regulate the impulſes of it, was put into activity, as it muſt be according to the ſame nature, by time and experience. But the caſe aſſumed has no pretence to be admitted; neither is it poſſible to conceive, on any ſuppoſition, ſuch a ſtate of mankind as the philoſopher of Malmeſbury had figured to himſelf. How ever you ſuppoſe the human race to have begun, ſocieties, little indeed, but ſocieties ſtill, muſt have been co-eval with it. If there was a firſt man and a firſt woman, they and their children, for theſe could not nurſe and educate themſelves, muſt have conſtituted a firſt ſociety. If numbers of men and women ſprung out of the earth at once, there might be ſome conteſts among the men about theſe primitive ladies, and ſome violence might be employed, and ſome confuſion might ariſe, in the immediate hurry of copulation. But after that, the ſame inſtinct, which had cauſed variance, would have formed ſocieties. Families would have been ſoon raiſed; and the authority, ſubordination, order, and union, neceſſary to their well being, muſt have followed naturally: as we may

may obſerve that they do among the moſt ſavage people. Men never were, becauſe they could never ſubſiſt, in a ſtate of abſolute individuality. Self-love, directed by inſtinct to mutual pleaſure, made the union of man and woman. Self-love made that of parents and children. Self-love begat ſociability; and reaſon, a principal of human nature, as well as inſtinct, improved it. Reaſon improved it, extended it to relations more remote, and united ſeveral families into one community, as inſtinct had united ſeveral individuals into one family. Reaſon performed this by the help of experience: and what is the effect of experience? It is not to make any thing new in nature; it is to diſcover what was in nature, tho unobſerved before. We might ſay as truly that Columbus diſcovered a new world, in the abſolute as well as relative ſenſe of the word, as to ſay, with Hobbes, that when men diſtinguiſhed between juſt and unjuſt, and made laws and inſtitutions on that diſtinction, they made that to be juſt or unjuſt which was indifferent before. The natural obligation to exerciſe benevolence, to adminiſter juſtice, and to keep compacts, is as evident to human reaſon, as the deſire of happineſs is agreeable to human inſtinct. We deſire by inſtinct, we acquire by reaſon. The natural deſire leads us neceſſarily to the natural obligation: and we proceed, in this caſe, from intuitive to demonſtrative knowledge, by the ſame ſure ſteps, by which we proceed from the knowledge of our own, to that of God's, exiſtence. The law of na-

ture, or of right reaſon, is the real original of all poſitive laws. Such it appeared to TULLY [a], "Ergo eſt lex," ſays he, "juſtorum injuſtorum-"que diſtinctio ad illam antiquiſſimam et rerum "omnium principem expreſſa naturam, ad quam "leges hominum diriguntur." As the civil laws derive their authority from a conformity to this original, ſo it is their real, or ſuppoſed tendency to the ſame end that induces men to ſubmit to them. TULLY [b] ſhall ſupport my opinion again. It is certain, according to him, that they who gave laws to mankind "populis oſtendiſſe "ſe ea ſcripturos atque laturos, quibus illi ad-"ſcriptis ſuſceptiſque honeſte beateque viverent*.

LET

[a] De Leg. Lib. ii [b] Ibid.

* Tho I would not take TULLY for my guide in matters of the firſt philoſophy, yet his opinions are often true, and his authority is always of weight, if not to determine, yet to confirm, us on ſuch ſubjects as theſe. It does ſo very reaſonably in the notions that are advanced, and implied in this paragraph. They who aſſume that the will of a ſuperior can alone conſtitute obligation, do really trifle, and miſtake too groſly: ſince not only a moral obligation may exiſt without a law, but a law may be ſuch as to create no moral obligation. When we ſpeak of moral obligations, either we mean nothing, or we mean that we are tied, bound †, and under an internal, that is, a moral, neceſſity of conforming ourſelves to thoſe rules which are expreſſed in the conſtitution of our nature, and on the obſervation of which the happineſs of our kind depends. Reaſon is in this caſe the obliger. A rational creature is the obliged; and he is ſo obliged as no law, made by mere will, can of itſelf oblige. The mere will of a legiſlator may conſtrain, may force, may create an outward, a phyſical neceſſity; but this neceſſity implies no obligation: and if kings lords and

† Obligatio a ligando.

commons

LET it not be ſaid that men have been ſometimes ſeduced, and ſometimes forced, to receive the will of other men for law; that this has been done without any regard to the law of nature, and might have been done juſt as effectually on the ſuppoſition of no ſuch law. Reaſon will tell us that it cannot, and experience that it has not been ſo done, whatever appearances may have ſtruck thoſe who do not look far enough back to the cauſes of things. Men are not attracted by ſounds or odors, nor hived, like bees; and, far from ſubmitting to civil laws made by mere will, they have ſubmitted to theſe, that they might not be governed by mere will. That fraud and force hold men in ſubjection, I do not deny, the firſt principally to eccleſiaſtical, and both to civil, tyranny. But this I deny, that fraud and force were ſufficient of themſelves, and the true, ſole,

commons had enacted, that when parents lived to the age of fourſcore their children ſhould put them to death, you would not have thought yourſelf under an obligation of putting your old mother to death. In ſhort, human laws are in a firſt conſideration nothing more than the dictates of will, the will of a legiſlator, enforced by ſuperior power; and in a ſecond, they may acquire, or not acquire, the right of obliging, as they have the power of forcing. But this order is inverted in the divine law of nature. The moral neceſſity of acting agreeably to it, in order to ſecure that happineſs which we are determined irreſiſtibly to deſire, is a firſt conſideration, and is alone ſufficient to create obligation. In diſcovering this law we are led to diſcover the legiſlator: and will is added to inveſt obligation with all the forms of law, the will of that Being who conſtituted the obligation when he made the human ſyſtem, and who, by conſtituting the obligation, made and promulgated the law.

and original means of ſubmitting men to ſuch tyranny.

I SHALL not ſpeak here of religious tyranny, the firſt, and, with reſpect to the authority it profanes, the moſt audacious, offspring of fraud. Enough has been ſaid on that ſubject in another eſſay. Here I confine myſelf to civil inſtitutions and civil government alone: and I reſt aſtoniſhed at the ſtrange perverſion of reaſon in thoſe men, who make the abuſe of natural law, as far as they can, paſs for the original of all law. Could the fraud, or, if you will ſoften the terms, the art, of legiſlators have impoſed originally for laws the dictates of mere will? Certainly not. Mere will would have revolted mankind from them, if it had appeared to be ſuch: and it would have appeared to be ſuch, if there had not been, in the nature of things and in the reaſon of man, a law which ſometimes gave, and always ſeemed to give, a ſanction to their laws. What therefore could fraud do, or has fraud done, in this reſpect? Nothing more than this: When reaſon and experience determined men to walk in thoſe paths which the law of nature points out, and which lead to the happineſs of their kind; fraud, like an unfaithful guide, led them inſenſibly into others. Nature directed them to unite in ſocieties, and to ſubmit to civil laws, for their common utility. Fraud betrayed them into the tyranny of mere will: and when various inſtitutions and various cuſtoms had made them loſe ſight of the law of their nature, it was not hard to per-

ſuade them that the dictates of will, deſigned for particular not common utility, and even repugnant to this law, were deduced from it. Thus, again, as to force: When abſolute power is once eſtabliſhed, it may impoſe arbitrary will for law. It cannot make things juſt or unjuſt, nor create natures, that exiſted before government, human government itſelf. But as they were ill obſerved then, they may be ill defined now, in particular inſtances. The unjuſt may paſs for what it is in ſome caſes, and be decreed juſt in others: and thus civil laws not only may, but do very frequently, confound the diſtinction that nature has made, the very diſtinction which is ſo falſely aſcribed to their ſole authority. But whatever abſolute power does when it is eſtabliſhed, how could it be eſtabliſhed originally, and in a ſtate of nature like that which is ſuppoſed? Abſolute power muſt have been acquired by ſuperior force, and ſuperior force by ſuperior numbers. Still the queſtion will return, how were theſe ſuperior numbers collected in one intereſt, and under one direction? They could not be ſo originally by force; for force ſuppoſes them, and is derived from them. HERCULES might have travelled with his club in his hand, from the eaſt to the weſt: his club might have deſtroyed here and there a monſter, but would have formed a ſociety no where. Nothing but conſent can form originally collective bodies of men. Nothing but conſent, therefore, to which men are determined by the ſociability of their nature, by an antecedent

law, could have raiſed an army, or created that force by which it is aſſumed that all laws, thoſe we call civil and thoſe we call natural, were alike impoſed on mankind.

On the whole, as faſt as families united in larger ſocieties, and the ſame plain and ſimple rules, the firſt rudiments of natural law, that had been ſufficient under paternal government, were ſo no longer, but required greater extenſion and a greater variety of application; philoſophers and legiſlators aroſe, conſtituted governments, and made laws wiſely and unwiſely, agreeably and diſagreeably to the nature of things, according to the general imperfection of human productions. But there would have been no ſocieties to whom laws might be given, no pretence to give them, no diſpoſition to receive them, if there had not been a primeval law, a law by which the families of men were governed in that ſtate which we commonly call a ſtate of nature, and which laid the principles of future government in another ſtate, to which they were advancing gradually. This primeval law is that code wherein all the laws, to which God has ſubjected his human creatures, are contained. Civil laws are the gloſſes which ſometimes explain and ſometimes perplex it, which men make, and men may alter at their will; whilſt the other remains immutable like that of God. Hobbes ſeems to admit this primeval law, and to give up his own doctrine in that place of his book De cive where he ſpeaks to this

this effect, for I quote here upon my memory, "that men were obliged to enter into compacts "to preſerve one another; and to ſeek peace "wherever it could be had, in order to pre-"vent the miſchief and deſolation which would "attend his imaginary ſtate of nature." Now if ſome things were fit to be prevented, ſome things were unfit to be done, in the ſuppoſed ſtate of nature: from whence it follows that the diſtinction between juſt and unjuſt was made before governments were inſtituted, or legiſlators made it; which the ſame Mr. HOBBES denies.

I CONCLUDE my reflections by obſerving that the whole hypotheſis ſeems to be raiſed on three great miſtakes. It conſiders man, in the ſtate of nature, under the direction of his appetites alone, and going out of that ſtate as ſoon as he begins to exerciſe his reaſon; altho HOBBES ſays, inconſiſtently enough on ſome occaſions, that right reaſon is the rule of human actions, even antecedently to civil laws. But to think rightly of man in this very ſtate, we ought to conſider him under the actual direction of all his natural faculties, of his reaſon as well as his appetites; of his reaſon artleſs indeed and untutored by experience, but therefore undebauched likewiſe, and in all caſes ſufficient to demonſtrate to him the firſt general and obvious principles on which the happineſs of his kind is built, and to which he is plainly and ſtrongly directed by the neceſſities of his nature. In the next place, this hypotheſis conſiders

each man as an individual, no more a member of the great commonwealth of mankind than of any particular commonwealth; it ſuppoſes him to have a right to every thing, and to be a rival and enemy on that account to every other man: whereas it is not more evident that we are born to walk with our legs, and to handle things with our hands, than it is that we are born to aſſiſt, and to be aſſiſted by, one another. It is not more plain that each man cannot enjoy every thing, than it is that each man has not an unlimited right to enjoy every thing, or that the right of each man, where things are common, is limited by his real wants. It did not require more ſagacity to diſcover theſe truths in a ſtate of nature, than it did to reaſon and to act as unnaturally as mankind muſt have done in a perpetual round of jealouſy, precaution, and deſign, according to their plan of life, ſuch as HOBBES had imagined it. In the next and laſt place, this hypotheſis confounds the ideas of original laws, and of laws made to explain and renew theſe. It does this unneceſſarily too, unleſs we ſuppoſe this philoſopher to have been ſo abſolutely an atheiſt, that he was forced by his ſyſtem to aſcribe the obligation of all law to man, and not to God: for nothing can be better founded, nor more conſequential, in the reaſon of all thoſe who acknowledge ſuch a being, than this opinion, that the author of all nature, having given to his different creatures different natures, according to the different purpoſes for which they were deſigned in the ſcheme of his providence,

vidence, and every one of theſe natures including it's own peculiar law, whether that of inſtinct or that of reaſon, the moſt rational of his human creatures eſtabliſhed from time to time rules of conduct and government conformable to it, and which are in particular inſtances ſo many republications of it. To uſe an obvious and familiar example: the ſame rights of Engliſhmen, which were ſettled by the great charter, have been enacted over again by many particular laws: would Mr. HOBBES have dated theſe rights, if he had admitted them, from theſe later laws? He would not moſt certainly,

To conclude therefore: nothing of this kind can deſerve our attention more, becauſe nothing can contribute more to keep us within the golden mean of truth, than to obſerve the ſtrange extremes into which philoſophers are carried by preſumption, by an affectation of ſingularity, and by other motives, little leſs inexcuſable, tho in appearance more plauſible. Thus they are carried, in the inſtance before us, ſome to ſet the principles of morality out of our ſight and their own too, whilſt they aſſume them to be derived from eternal natures, independent on the will of God; ſome, to lay theſe principles as much too low, as low as the level of human policy, whilſt they aſſume them to be nominal natures, dependent on the will of man; ſome, to inſiſt that God wills we ſhould follow, in our moral conduct, the ſame eternal rule which he follows himſelf, in the

the government of the univerſe; and ſome, to affirm that, far from having any rule at all, every thing is indifferent in it's nature, and man by nature a lawleſs ſavage.

IV.

AFTER cenſuring theſe extremes, it becomes proper to enquire, a little more particularly, what the truth is, which lies between them; how the laws of nature develope themſelves to the human underſtanding; how ſelf-love leads to ſociability, and the moſt confined principle extends itſelf to be that which connects the whole race of mankind. But before I ſay any thing further on theſe ſubjects, I muſt give ſome anſwer to a query which our good friend the b. of C. makes. The query is this, "Whether there is any abſurdity in ſuppoſing that man ſhould imitate "the author of nature, ſo far as he is able?" This is ſaid to be "not only agreeable to the "chriſtian plan, but alſo to that of the Stoics. "See BALBUS in TULLY De nat. deorum."

IN anſwer to this query I confeſs, and think myſelf obliged in conſcience to confeſs, that I hold it to be abſurd, and worſe than abſurd, to aſſert that man can imitate God, except in a ſenſe ſo very remote, and ſo improper, that the expreſſion ſhould never be uſed, and much leſs ſuch a duty be recommended. Divines have diſtinguiſhed, in their bold analyſes, between God's phyſical

cal and his moral attributes: for which diſtinction, tho I ſee ſeveral theological, I do not ſee one religious, purpoſe that it is neceſſary to anſwer. But, the diſtinction once made by their ſupreme authority, tho they admit that we cannot imitate God in the exerciſe of the former, they inſiſt that we can, and ought to imitate him in the exerciſe of the latter: and, to complete this proof, that conſiſts of affirmation rather than argument, they maintain, at leaſt CLARKE* does ſo very peremptorily, that the divine moral attributes, that is, holineſs, goodneſs, juſtice, righteouſneſs, and truth, are the very ſame in God as they are in our ideas. Nay he adds that God, out of a tender and hearty concern for the happineſs of man (ſtrange words to be applied to the Supreme Being!) deſires to be imitated by him in thoſe perfections, which are the foundation of his own unchangeable happineſs.

WHEN they diſtinguiſh thus between the phyſical and moral attributes, it is plain that they ſee how abſurd they would appear, if they propoſed to creatures, conſcious of their corporeal and mental weakneſs, to imitate, even ſo far as they are able or in any degree, infinite power and wiſdom; which would be a ridiculous mimickry, not a real imitation. When they propoſe this imitation of the moral attributes, they flatter themſelves that the ridicule will be leſs liable to obſervation. Theſe attributes are leſs ſo; and they can

* Evidences, p. 316.

make,

make, by the help of their precarious metaphyſical and logical reaſonings, ſuch repreſentations of them as may ſeem to render them imitable by man. But they would do well to conſider that, if the moral attributes were demonſtrated by arguments à priori, and they are not ſo even by them, to be the ſame in God as they are in our ideas, yet this general aſſurance would be far from making them objects of human imitation. To be ſuch, they muſt be known à poſteriori, like his phyſical attributes; for we can have no knowledge of either, except that which ſenſe and experience give us. They muſt be diſcerned in the works of God, and in the conduct of his providence: and it is evident that they are not, cannot be, ſo diſcerned in them as to be proper objects of our imitation. The divine attributes are exerciſed in ſuch innumerable relations abſolutely unknown to us, that tho we are ſure the exerciſe of them, in the immenſity of the univerſe, is always directed by the all-perfect Being to that which is fitteſt to be done on the whole; yet the notions of created beings who ſee them in one relation alone, like us, cannot be applied to them with any propriety, nor with any certainty, ſufficient to make them objects of their imitation. This is ſo true, that in many caſes we ſhould act in direct contradiction to the law of our nature, if we made the conduct of divine providence the rule of ours. God makes his ſun to riſe upon the evil and the good, and he ſends rain on the juſt and the unjuſt. He involves the innocent with

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the guilty in great calamities: and there is no theme on which divines enlarge more pathetically, than on the unjuſt diſtribution of good and evil, when they join with the atheiſts, tho for different purpoſes, in one common cry. Are theſe appearances, however conſtant ſome, and however frequent others, of them may be, to ſtand as objects that we are to imitate in our moral conduct? I think no man will ſay that they are, except thoſe who have ſo little regard to conſiſtency that they propoſe the firſt to our imitation, whilſt they aggravate the two laſt to ſuch a degree, that they aſſume the juſtice and goodneſs of God's diſpenſations, in this ſyſtem, to be capable of no other vindication than that which ſuppoſes another. Theſe writers and preachers therefore muſt mean, when they exhort us to imitate God, not the God whom we ſee in his works, and in all that his providence orders or permits; but the God who appears in their repreſentations of him, and who is often ſuch a God as no pious theiſt can acknowledge.

When Balbus, ſince Balbus is cited on this occaſion, endeavours to prove the world a wiſe being and a God, he ſays, ſpeaking after Chryſippus, "ipſe autem homo ortus eſt ad mundum "contemplandum et imitandum." He is born to do this ſo far as he is able, for the world is perfect, and he is only "quaedam particula per-"fecti." He has only a participation, our divines would ſay, of the divine perfections. Further on,

on, the ſame BALBUS, being to prove that the world is governed by the providence of the gods, aſſumes that the gods muſt be "non ſolum animantes, ſed etiam rationis compotes;" and that they muſt live together in a ſort of civil ſociety, governing the world like one common republic or city. From hence it follows, he ſays, that there is the ſame reaſon, the ſame truth, and the ſame law of right and wrong utrobique, both in God and man. The wiſdom, the reaſon, the prudence of the gods are greater indeed, tho of the ſame kind: and ſince theſe are employed by them "in maximis et optimis rebus," they muſt be employed of neceſſity in the government of the world; becauſe nothing can be greater nor better than the world, "nec majus, nec melius mundo." Theſe are all the paſſages I recollect, where BALBUS ſpeaks of any thing pertinent to the preſent queſtion; and I cannot find any thing in them that is favorable to the doctrine taught by platonic and chriſtian divines about our obligation to imitate God. I am ſorry to find too that this doctrine is more extravagant than the extravagancies of the Stoics. To maintain that the material world is a divine animal, a wiſe being, and a god, is blaſphemous and abſurd. But to ſay that man is born to contemplate and imitate the world, may admit of a very good ſenſe, with a little interpretation; ſince it may be made to ſignify, what it would be better to expreſs plainly, that man is born to contemplate the world, and to conform his behaviour to the will of

of God, that is manifeſted, relatively to man, in the conſtitution of it. Thus the doctrine of BALBUS may receive a reaſonable interpretation; which, I am ſure, that of CLARKE and other chriſtian divines cannot: and, beſides, it will afford as much pathetic matter "per la predica," with the advantage of being true, as the other, which, however piouſly intended or heard, is falſe and profane.

THE man, who neglects the duties of natural religion and the obligations of morality, acts againſt his nature, and lives in open defiance to the author of it. God declares for one order of things, he for another. God blends together the duty and intereſt of his creature: his creature ſeparates them, deſpiſes the duty, and propoſes to himſelf another intereſt. He, who acts in a conformity to the nature of things, carries on the ſyſtem of God, and co-operates with him: and ſurely to put the ſyſtem of divine wiſdom in execution, and to co-operate with the creator, is honor enough for the creature. Thus we may attain to the perfection of our nature, and, by pretending to no more, we may do it real honor: whereas by aſſuming that we imitate God, we give the ſtrongeſt proof of the imperfection of our nature, whilſt we neglect the real, and aſpire vainly at a mock honor; as pride, ſeduced by adulation, is prone to do; and as religious pride, wrought up by ſelf-conceit into enthuſiaſm, does above all others. They who encourage and flatter this

pride, like CLARKE, are a ſort of eunomians, and boaſt, like the founder of that ſect, and the faſt friend of the Arians, that they know God as well as he knows himſelf.

HEATHEN divines were very far from having the ſame preſumption. The gods they pretended to know were inmates in one great houſe with men, or fellow citizens of one great city. Such gods they might pretend to know, and to imitate too. But we ſhall not find that thoſe of them, who acknowledged, beſides theſe inferior generated gods, one ſupreme ungenerated Being, preſumed to claim any ſuch intimate acquaintance with him. On the contrary, they ſuppoſed him to be above all human conception, and therefore above all human imitation. He did not ſtand, in their ideas of him, even in the relation to man of creator or governor, except he might be ſaid to ſtand mediately, through theſe inferior divinities, in that relation: and thus we have another inſtance of the ſtrange extremes into which philoſophers run. Theſe extremes would be avoided, if they could content themſelves to know God as he has thought fit to be known by them: and why are they not, divines eſpecially, ſo content? He appears in his works, and by eaſy deductions from our knowledge of them, to be the firſt, ſelf-exiſtent, intelligent cauſe of all things, a Being of infinite wiſdom and power, and therefore an object to all rational creatures not of curioſity, but of awe, of reverence, of adoration,

of

of gratitude, of obedience, of reſignation. To what purpoſe then do divines contend to make him an object of human imitation, by deductions from his nature and attributes, independently of his works, by which alone they can have the little, inadequate, general, but ſufficient, knowledge of his nature and attributes that has been mentioned? Do they hope to carry theſin, and the obligations of natural religion further, by nice metaphyſical ſpeculations, hard to underſtand, and inconcluſive when they are underſtood, than by thoſe obvious proofs which God has proportioned to the comprehenſion of every man? I conclude therefore my anſwer to this query, by aſking, in my turn, our excellent friend, whether the doctrine of imitating God, even ſo far as we are able, does not tend to draw men off unneceſſarily, and, if I may ſay ſo, wantonly, from real knowledge, into thoſe abſtractions that have led ſo many to confound the divine and the human nature, to imagine an uninterrupted ſcale of intelligence from man up to God, to flatter themſelves with notions, not only of imitating him, but of being united to him, and to invent or adopt, in the licentiouſneſs of imagination, all that metaphyſical and myſtical blaſphemy which has paſſed for the moſt ſublime theology.

V.

WHAT has been ſaid in anſwer to the query about imitating God, is not remote from the ſubject we are upon, tho it may ſeem a digreſſion,

ſince it tends to lay the principles of natural law on their true foundation. All that can be ſaid, to any real and uſeful purpoſe, concerning this law is extremely plain. It lies too in a very narrow compaſs: and yet what volumes have been written, what diſputes have ariſen, about it; whilſt men have been, as authors are commonly, much more intent to ſhew their learning or acuteneſs, than to ſet their ſubject in a clear and ſufficient light. A ſuperfluous glare not only tires, but offuſques, the intellectual ſight: and of this there are examples to be found. But the writers I ſpeak of here ſeem oftener to do like the ſchoolmen, of whom my lord BACON ſays very wittily and juſtly, that inſtead of ſetting up a light ſufficient to enlighten a large room, they go about with a ſmall taper, and, whilſt they illuminate one corner, darken the reſt. He ſays very truly that they break the ſolidity of ſcience by the minuteneſs of their queſtions; and, we may add as truly, that the learned perſons I intend here, of both ſorts, puzzle and perplex the plaineſt thing in the world; ſometimes by citations little to the purpoſe, or of little authority; ſometimes by a great apparatus of abſtract reaſoning, and by dint of explanation. Read SELDEN, read GROTIUS, read CUMBERLAND, read PUFFENDORF, to mention no others, if you have leiſure and patience for it: and after you have done ſo, I will appeal to you for the truth of the judgment I make. There are many curious reſearches, no doubt, and many excellent obſervations in theſe writers; but they ſeem to be great writers on this ſubject by much the

the ſame right, as he might be called a great traveller, who ſhould go from London to Paris by the Cape of Good Hope.

AMONG all the trifling queſtions that have been raiſed concerning the law of nature, none is more trifling than the cavil made at the very expreſſion. It is futile and pedantic, and would not deſerve of itſelf even the little notice that I have taken of it occaſionally. But the ill conſequence of admitting it, with reſpect to the original and univerſal obligation of the law, makes it deſerve refutation. HOBBES uſed the term, tho he denied the thing. His point of view was to derive all law from the authority of the civil magiſtrate; and therefore, tho he acknowledged right reaſon to be the rule, he would not allow it to be the law, of human actions. But the inſtances he brings in proof are nothing to the purpoſe. The laws of nature, taught by philoſophers in their writings, are not therefore written laws, nor are the writings of lawyers ſuch, for want of a ſupreme authority, "ob defectum auctoritatis ſummae." No doubt they are not. But if they are conformable to the nature of things, they have an authority ſuperior to HOBBES's ſupreme authority. Tho philoſophers and lawyers collected them, God made them; and civil laws themſelves have no real, no intrinſecal authority diſtinct from this. Nay, an avowed atheiſt might indulge us in the uſe of this term, like HOBBES, whether he was one or no, tho ſome divines will not; for the rule of right reaſon muſt

appear evident to him, if he reflects at all on the nature of things, and not the rule alone, but the happineſs or unhappineſs of mankind, conſequent to the obſervation or the breach of it: all which together, he muſt own, would amount to a law; if he could bring himſelf to acknowledge a lawgiver; and comes very near it, however, in a large but proper ſenſe. How ſhould it not, when we collect this double ſanction from the ſame nature from whence we collect the rule?

SELDEN, much more orthodox than HOBBES, in his firſt book De jure nat. et gent. juxta diſc. ebraeor. where he treats this matter with that profuſion of learning which he pours forth on every occaſion, agrees that the principles of natural law were diſcovered by the right uſe of reaſon. But, after this, he endeavours to ſhew, from the different and contrary placets of philoſophers, as well as inſtitutions of legiſlators, that reaſon cannot frame ſuch an uniform ſtated rule of right and wrong as this has been repreſented, nor much leſs a law without a legiſlative authority: and he concludes, as every theiſt muſt, and as the Jews did, that God, who made the law of nature, publiſhed it originally, and publiſhes it conſtantly to men. Now that God made the law, is certain; that he gave it, and ſtill gives it "perpetua indicatione," is no leſs certain: but the manner in which he gave, and continues to give it, according to the Jews, is very far from being ſo. It is a rhapſody of aſſumed fact, and of ſuperſtitious and enthuſiaſtical

ſiaſtical notions, common to them, to ſeveral heathen philoſophers, to chriſtian fathers, to ſcholaſtic divines, to mahometan doctors, and arabian metaphyſicians. To lay the foundation of the law of nature on ſuch vain hypotheſes, is to make the moſt important of human concerns ridiculous, the moſt diſtinct and cleareſt ideas confuſed and obſcure, and, in a word, to hinder us from ſeeing truth itſelf in a clear light.

GOD gave the law of nature, according to the rabbinical doctrine, by word of mouth to ADAM firſt, and to NOAH afterwards: and the great principles of it were contained in the ſeven articles that are called Septem praecepta Noachidarum, by whom they mean not NOAH and his immediate offspring alone, but the whole race of mankind. How the laſt of theſe laws, "de membro animalis "viventis non comedendo," came to be given to ADAM, if it was not lawful to eat any fleſh, as they ſay it was not in the antediluvian world, is not eaſily explained. We may therefore ſuppoſe that they did not mean to include this article among the precepts given to ADAM, tho an inconſiſtency never ſtopped the talmudiſts, and tho the rabbins blunder daily through many that are as obvious as this. The diſtinction they make between themſelves and all other people, with reſpect to the divine communication of this law, is a little more intelligible. As they were deſcendants of NOAH, this law was given to them in common with all men; and ſince there was no written law before

before Moses, their patriarchs themselves could have no other moral law than this tradition. But then, as they were a chosen people, selected and separated from the rest of mankind, God gave them, by his servant Moses, a peculiar law: and thus they stood distinguished from the rest of the Noachide, whom they called the Nations; as the Greeks had the folly to call every man a barbarian who was not a Greek, and as even the modern Italians, to say nothing of the old Romans, have sometimes given the same appellation even to the most civilised of their neighbours.

Another way, by which, according to the same rabbinical doctrine, the law of nature was and is communicated to man by God, is that of immediate or mediate inspiration, in opposition to mere rational faculties and operations. I call it inspiration, because the Jews imagined an "intellectus "agens," or active spirit, by the influence or illumination of which, and in concurrence with which, the human understanding is made capable of knowing, not only the laws of nature, but all the other principles of science, and deductions of reason, which are the objects of it. This "intellectus "agens" is sometimes, and to them, God himself, by a particular prerogative belonging to their nation, "ex prerogativa gentis." To other men it is the minister of God, that illuminates their minds, like an intellectual sun, by a force and with an authority derived from God. It was in the first way, no doubt, that Aristum discovered by philosophical

losophical meditation, in the midst of idolatry, the existence of the one true God: and, to say the truth, the Jews should be, by virtue of this prerogative, the most enlightened and the most knowing people on earth; whereas they seem to have been in all ages the very reverse; before their captivity, indocile and ignorant; after it, credulous and bigot, little curious of the real, much addicted to the imaginary, sciences that were cultivated, by other nations.

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They entertained the notion of this second kind of inspiration later than that of the first, "juxta "disciplinam recentiorem," says SELDEN: and it is no wonder that they did so. They had been used to think that the divine presence resided amongst them, and that they consulted God by their high priest; that he spoke immediately to their prophets, and exercised his power immediately in the conduct of their affairs. But afterwards, tho he was near them still, he was not so near them; and mediate inspiration to illuminate their minds became necessary. Besides, it was not till after their captivity that a more refined philosophy, and notions more metaphysical than any they had had before, began to be introduced among them, whilst they lived under the Seleucidae and the Ptolemys, in ages when the first philosophy was growing up to that pitch of enthusiasm and madness at which it arrived in the school of Alexandria, and wherever the doctrines of the latter Pythagoricians and Platonicians prevailed. From hence, I suppose, it has happened that this dogma of

of the rabbins bears ſo near a reſemblance to the opinions of the greek, and, in imitation of them, of the arabian, metaphyſicians, who confounded together, with more difference of expreſſion than of meaning, if any of them can be ſaid properly to have had a meaning, the divine and human reaſon. But however all this may have been, the rabbins aſſert that the divine illuminating preſence, by which alone men are able to diſcover the law of nature, illuminated chiefly the deſcendants of SETH and of SEM, till the days in which the law was given by MOSES, when ſeven other prophets only aroſe among the nations; and that from this æra the divine illumination has ſeldom ſhined on any perſons except themſelves. So that, on this hypotheſis, no great improvement has been made in the ſciences ſince the days of MOSES, except by the Jews.

I HAVE drawn this ſketch from SELDEN, in order to contraſt the extravagancy of theſe notions, which are derived from a true principle, that the law of nature is the law of God, with thoſe of HOBBES, which are founded on this falſe principle, that the laws of nature are the laws of civil magiſtrates: and I conclude upon the whole, that we ſhall do much better to truſt ourſelves than ſuch maſters, who lead us into error about the origin of natural law, or about the means of arriving at the knowledge of it. One makes the origin independent on God, and ſome divines do little leſs. Another makes the means of arriving at the know-

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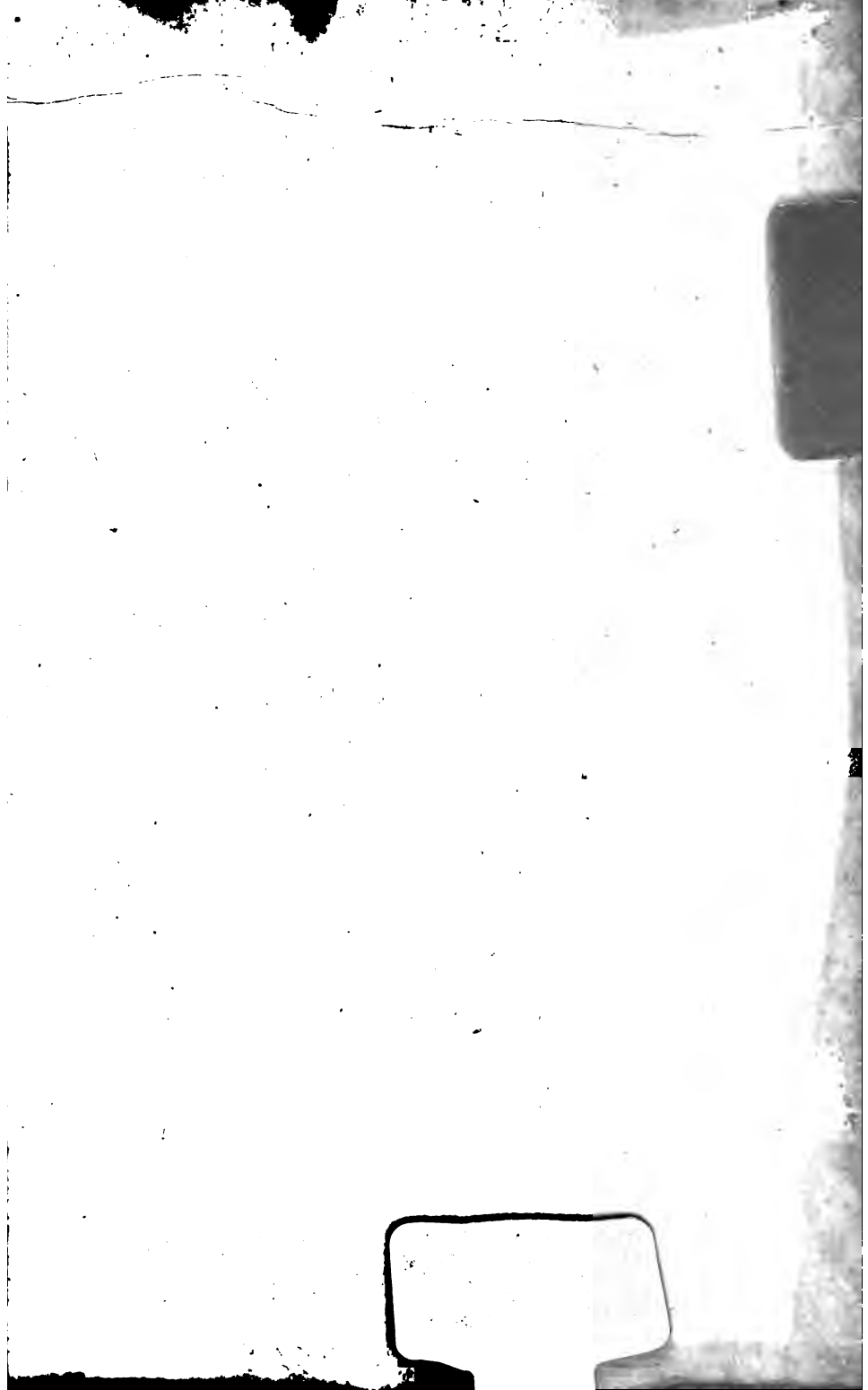
ledge independent on man, and above the ſtrength of his natural reaſon; tho the author of nature has been graciouſly pleaſed to proportion them one to the other. If theſe doctrines are hurtful in different reſpects, many words and much time are ſpent about others very little neceſſary, about abſtract notions of moral entities, and about the cauſes of moral truth, concerning which we may eaſily fall into error (whilſt we can fall into none concerning the great principles of it) unleſs we have the light of that nature to which our ſearch is directed. The philoſopher may, becauſe he does this; I had almoſt ſaid muſt: but the man of common ſenſe cannot err about theſe principles, tho he may remain in ignorance about ſome of them, for want of induſtry or opportunity to diſcover them all.

The END of the THIRD VOLUME.